THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN
THE PROGRESS OF LOVE
THE FOREST OF WILD THYME
DRAKE





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Collected poems

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COLLECTED POEMS VOLUME I.







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COLLECTED POEMS

ALFRED NOYES



VOLUME ONE

FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY PUBLISHERS

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CONTENTS

									GE
THE LOOM OF YEARS									1
IN THE HEART OF THE WOODS	S								2
Art									5
Triolet								•	8
A TRIPLE BALLAD OF OLD JA	PAN								8
THE SYMBOLIST									10
HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN .						•			11
NECROMANCY									12
THE MYSTIC								•	15
THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN									17
APES AND IVORY									48
A Song of Sherwood .									49
THE WORLD'S MAY-QUEEN									50
Pirates									53
A SONG OF ENGLAND									55
THE OLD SCEPTIC									57
THE DEATH OF CHOPIN .									59
Song\									62
BUTTERFLIES ,									62
SONG OF THE WOODEN-LEGGE	D F	lDI	LEI	3					66
THE FISHER-GIRL									67
A Song of Two Berdens									71
EARTH-BOUND . \									72
ART, THE HERALD			, , 1	. 01					74
THE OPTIMIST	. ,	. 7			1				74
A Post-Impression \									76
THE BARREL-ORGAN	13.	10 5	.44						80
THE LITANY OF WAR		. "		61					85
THE ORIGIN OF LIFE									86
THE LAST BATTLE \.									88
THE PARADOX \									89

77

CONTENTS

												PAGE
The Progress of Lo												. 94
THE FOREST OF WILL	d Te	HYM	E									. 123
FORTY SINGING SEAM	IEN				٠							. 171
THE EMPIRE BUILDE	RS											. 175
Nelson's Year .												. 177
IN TIME OF WAR .												. 180
ODE FOR THE SEVENT	TETE	a Bi	IRTI	ADE	Y O	F S	VIN	ВU				. 186
In Cloak of Grey												188
A RIDE FOR THE QUE	EEN											189
Song												191
THE HIGHWAYMAN												192
THE HAUNTED PALAC	Œ											196
THE SCULPTOR												200
SUMMER											١.	201
AT DAWN												204
THE SWIMMER'S RAC	E											206
THE VENUS OF MILO										/.		208
THE NET OF VULCAN									./			209
NIOBE									1			209
ORPHEUS AND EURYD	ICE								1.			211
From the Shore .												220
THE RETURN												222
REMEMBRANCE								,				223
A Prayer								(224
Love's Ghost							./					224
On a Railway Plati	FORM	1										225
Oxford Revisited.						. /						226
THE THREE SHIPS .						. /.						228
SLUMBER-SONGS OF T						./.						230
Enceladus						1.						235
IN THE COOL OF THE	Eve	NIN	G									241
A ROUNDHEAD'S RAL	LYIN	G S	ONE									242
Vicisti, Galilæe				6) 69	43							243
Drake		, ,	41									246
	-											

COLLECTED POEMS

EARLY POEMS

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF JAMES PAYN

THE LOOM OF YEARS

In the light of the silent stars that shine on the struggling sea, In the weary cry of the wind and the whisper of flower and tree,

Under the breath of laughter, deep in the tide of tears, I hear the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The leaves of the winter wither and sink in the forest mould To colour the flowers of April with purple and white and gold: Light and scent and music die and are born again In the heart of a grey-haired woman who wakes in a world of pain.

The hound, the fawn and the hawk, and the doves that croon and coo.

We are all one woof of the weaving and the one warp threads us through,

One flying cloud on the shuttle that carries our hopes and fears As it goes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

The crosiers of the fern, and the crown, the crown of the rose.

Pass with our hearts to the Silence where the wings of music close,

Pass and pass to the Timeless that never a moment mars, Pass and pass to the Darkness that made the suns and stars. Has the soul gone out in the Darkness? Is the dust sealed from sight?

Ah, hush, for the woof of the ages returns thro' the warp of the night!

Never that shuttle loses one thread of our hopes and fears, As it comes thro' the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

O, woven in one wide Loom thro' the throbbing weft of the whole,

One in spirit and flesh, one in body and soul.

The leaf on the winds of autumn, the bird in its hour to die,

The heart in its muffled anguish, the sea in its mournful cry,

One with the flower of a day, one with the withered moon, One with the granite mountains that melt into the noon, One with the dream that triumphs beyond the light of the spheres,

We come from the Loom of the Weaver that weaves the Web of Years.

IN THE HEART OF THE WOODS

T

The Heart of the woods, I hear it, beating, beating afar,
In the glamour and gloom of the night, in the light of the
rosy star,

In the cold sweet voice of the bird, in the throb of the flower-soft sea! . . .

For the Heart of the woods is the Heart of the world and the Heart of Eternity,

Ay, and the burning passionate Heart of the heart in you and me.

Love of my heart, love of the world, linking the golden moon With the flowery moths that flutter thro' the scented leaves of June, And the mind of man with beauty, and youth with the dreaming night

Of stars and flowers and waters and breasts of glimmering white,

And streaming hair of fragrant dusk and flying limbs of lovely light;

Life of me, life of me, shining in sun and cloud and wind,
In the dark eyes of the fawn and the eyes of the hound behind,
In the leaves that lie in the seed unsown, and the dream
of the babe unborn,

O, flaming tides of my blood, as you flow thro' flower and root and thorn.

I feel you burning the boughs of night to kindle the fires of morn.

Soul of me, soul of me, yearning wherever a lavrock sings, Or the crimson gloom is winnowed by the whirr of wooddoves' wings,

Or the spray of the foam-bow rustles in the white dawn of the moon,

And mournful billows mean aloud, Come soon, soon, soon, Come soon, O Death with the Heart of love and the secret of the rune.

Heart of me, heart of me, heart of me, beating afar, In the green gloom of the night, in the light of the rosy star, In the cold sweet voice of the bird, in the throb of the flower-soft sea! . . .

O, the Heart of the woods is the Heart of the world and the Heart of Eternity,

Ay, and the burning passionate Heart of the heart in you and

II

O, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood, The song is in my blood, night and day:

We will pluck a scented petal from the Rose upon the Rood Where Love lies bleeding on the way. We will listen to the linnet and watch the waters leap, When the clouds go dreaming by, And under the wild roses and the stars we will sleep, And wander on together, you and I.

We shall understand the mystery that none has understood,
We shall know why the leafy gloom is green.
O, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood

When we see what the stars have seen!

When we see what the stars have seen!

We have heard the hidden song of the soft dews falling At the end of the last dark sky,

Where all the sorrows of the world are calling, We must wander on together, you and I.

They are calling, calling, Away, come away!

And we know not whence they call;

For the song is in our hearts, we hear it night and day,

As the deep tides rise and fall:

O, Death will never find us in the heart of the wood, While the hours and the years roll by!

We have heard it, we have heard it, but we have not understood,

We must wander on together, you and I.

The wind may beat upon us, the rain may blind our eyes,
The leaves may fall beneath the winter's wing;
But we shall bear the music of the draw that power dies

But we shall hear the music of the dream that never dies, And we shall know the secret of the Spring.

We shall know how all the blossoms of evil and of good Are mingled in the meadows of the sky;

And then—if Death can find us in the heart of the wood—We shall wander on together, you and I.

ART

(IMITATED FROM DE BANVILLE AND GAUTIER)

I

Yes! Beauty still rebels!
Our dreams like clouds disperse:
She dwells
In agate, marble, verse.

No false constraint be thine!
But, for right walking, choose
The fine,
The strict cothurnus, Muse.

Vainly ye seek to escape
The toil! The yielding phrase
Ye shape
Is clay, not chrysoprase.

And all in vain ye scorn
That seeming ease which ne'er
Was born
Of aught but love and care.

Take up the sculptor's tool!

Recall the gods that die

To rule

In Parian o'er the sky.

For Beauty still rebels!
Our dreams like clouds disperse:
She dwells
In agate, marble, verse.

П

When Beauty from the sea, With breasts of whiter rose Than we Behold on earth, arose. 5 ART

Naked thro' Time returned
The Bliss of Heaven that day,
And burned
The dross of earth away.

Kings at her splendour quailed. For all his triple steel
She haled
War at her chariot-wheel.

The rose and lily bowed
To cast, of odour sweet
A cloud
Before her wandering feet.

And from her radiant eyes
There shone on soul and sense
The skies'
Divine indifference.

O, mortal memory fond! Slowly she passed away Beyond The curling clouds of day.

Return, we cry, return,
Till in the sadder light
We learn
That she was infinite.

The Dream that from the sea With breasts of whiter rose Than we Behold on earth, arose.

III

Take up the sculptor's tool!

Recall the dreams that die

To rule

In Parian o'er the sky;

ART 7

And kings that not endure In bronze to re-ascend Secure Until the world shall end.

Poet, let passion sleep
Till with the cosmic rhyme
You keep
Eternal tone and time,

By rule of hour and flower, By strength of stern restraint And power To fail and not to faint.

The task is hard to learn
While all the songs of Spring
Return
Along the blood and sing.

Yet hear—from her deep skies, How Art, for all your pain, Still cries Ye must be born again!

Reject the wreath of rose, Take up the crown of thorn That shows To-night a child is born.

The far immortal face
In chosen onyx fine
Enchase,
Delicate line by line.

Strive with Carrara, fight With Parian, till there steal To light Apollo's pure profile. Set the great lucid form
Free from its marble tomb
To storm
The heights of death and doom.

Take up the sculptor's tool!

Recall the gods that die

To rule

In Parian o'er the sky.

TRIOLET

Love, awake! Ah, let thine eyes
Open, clouded with thy dreams.
Now the shy sweet rosy skies,
Love, awake. Ah, let thine eyes
Dawn before the last star dies.
O'er thy breast the rose-light gleams:
Love, awake! Ah, let thine eyes
Open, clouded with thy dreams.

A TRIPLE BALLAD OF OLD JAPAN

In old Japan, by creek and bay,
The blue plum-blossoms blow,
Where birds with sea-blue plumage gay
Thro' sea-blue branches go:
Dragons are coiling down below
Like dragons on a fan;
And pig-tailed sailors lurching slow
Thro' streets of old Japan.

There, in the dim blue death of day
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow,
Then lovers wander whispering low
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow
Thro' streets of old Japan.

From Wonderland to Yea-or-Nay
The junks of Weal-and-Woe
Dream on the purple water-way
Nor ever meet a foe;
Though still, with stiff mustachio
And crookéd ataghan,
Their pirates guard with pomp and show
The ships of old Japan.

That land is very far away,
We lost it long ago!
No fairies ride the cherry spray,
No witches mop and mow,
The violet wells have ceased to flow;
And O, how faint and wan
The dawn on Fusiyama's snow,
The peak of old Japan.

Half smilingly our hearts delay,
Half mournfully forego
The blue fantastic twisted day
When faithful Konojo,
For small white Lily Hasu-ko
Knelt in the Butsudan,
And her tomb opened to bestrow
Lilies thro' old Japan.

There was a game they used to play
I' the San-ju-san-jen Dō,
They filled a little lacquer tray
With powders in a row,
Dry dust of flowers from Tashiro
To Mount Daimugenzan,
Dry little heaps of dust, but O
They breathed of old Japan.

Then knights in blue and gold array
Would on their thumbs bestow
A pinch from every heap and say,
With many a hum and ho,

What blossoms, nodding to and fro
For joy of maid or man,
Conceived the scents that puzzled so
The brains of old Japan.

The hundred ghosts have ceased to affray
The dust of Kyotó,
Ah yet, what phantom blooms a-sway
Murmur, a-loft, a-low,
In dells no scythe of death can mow,
No power of reason scan,
O, what Samúrai singers know
The Flower of old Japan?

Dry dust of blossoms, dim and gray,
Lost on the wind? Ah, no,
Hark, from yon clump of English may,
A cherub's mocking crow,
A sudden twang, a sweet, swift throe,
As Daisy trips by Dan,
And careless Cupid drops his bow
And laughs—from old Japan.

There, in the dim blue death of day
Where white tea-roses grow,
Petals and scents are strewn astray
Till night be sweet enow,
Then lovers wander, whispering low,
As lovers only can,
Where rosy paper lanterns glow
Thro' streets of old Japan.

THE SYMBOLIST

Help me to seek that unknown land!

I kneel before the shrine.

Help me to feel the hidden hand

That ever holdeth mine.

I kneel before the Word, I kneel Before the Cross of flameI cry, as thro' the gloom I steal, The glory of the Name.

Help me to mourn, and I shall love; What grief is like to mine? Crown me with thorn, the stars above Shall in the circlet shine!

The Temple opens wide: none sees
The love, the dream, the light!
O, blind and finite, are not these
Blinding and infinite?

The veil, the veil is rent: the skies
Are white with wings of fire,
Where victim souls triumphant rise
In torment of desire.

Help me to seek: I would not find,
For when I find I know
I shall have clasped the hollow wind
And built a house of snow.

HAUNTED IN OLD JAPAN

Music of the star-shine shimmering o'er the sea Mirror me no longer in the dusk of memory: Dim and white the rose-leaves drift along the shore. Wind among the roses, blow no more!

All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam, Silent, silent voices, cry no more of home! Soft beyond the cherry-trees, o'er the dim lagoon, Dawns the crimson lantern of the large low moon.

We that loved in April, we that turned away Laughing ere the wood-dove crooned across the May, Watch the withered rose-leaves drift along the shore. Wind among the roses, blow no more!

We the Sons of Reason, we that chose to bride Knowledge, and rejected the Dream that we denied, We that chose the Wisdom that triumphs for an hour, We that let the young love perish like a flower.

We that hurt the kind heart, we that went astray,
We that in the darkness idly dreamed of day. . . .
. . . Ah! The dreary rose-leaves drift along the shore.
Wind among the roses, blow no more!

Lonely starry faces, wonderful and white, Yearning with a cry across the dim sweet night, All our dreams are blown a-drift as flowers before a fan, All our hearts are haunted in the heart of old Japan.

Haunted, haunted—we that mocked and sinned Hear the vanished voices wailing down the wind, Watch the ruined rose-leaves drift along the shore. Wind among the roses, blow no more!

All along the purple creek, lit with silver foam, Sobbing, sobbing voices, cry no more of home! Soft beyond the cherry-trees, o'er the dim lagoon, Dawns the crimson lantern of the large low moon.

NECROMANCY

(AFTER THE PROSE OF BAUDELAIRE)

This necromantic palace, dim and rich,

Dim as a dream, rich as a reverie,

I knew it all of old, surely I knew

This floating twilight tinged with rose and blue,

This moon-soft carven niche

Whence the calm marble, wan as memory,

Slopes to the wine-brimmed bath of cold dark fire

Perfumed with old regret and dead desire.

There the soul, slumbering in the purple waves
Of indolence, dreams of the phantom years,
Dreams of the wild sweet flower of red young lips
Meeting and murmuring in the dark eclipse

Of joy, where pain still craves
One tear of love to mingle with their tears,
One passionate welcome ere the wild farewell,
One flash of heaven across the fires of hell.

Queen of my dreams, queen of my pitiless dreams,
Dim idol, moulded of the wild white rose,
Coiled like a panther in that silken gloom
Of scented cushions, where the rich hushed room
Breaks into soft warm gleams,
As from her slumbrous clouds Queen Venus glows,
Slowly thine arms up-lift to me, thine eyes
Meet mine, without communion or surmise.

Here, at thy feet, I watched, I watched all day
Night floating in thine eyes, then with my hands
Covered my face from that dumb ery of pain:
And when at last I dared to look again

My heart was far away,
Wrapt in the fragrant gloom of Eastern lands,
Under the flower-white stars of tropic skies
Where soft black floating flowers turned to . . . thine
eyes.

I breathe, I breathe the perfume of thine hair:
Bury in thy deep hair my fevered face,
Till as to men athirst in desert dreams
The savour and colour and sound of cool dark streams
Float round me everywhere.

And memories float from some forgotten place, Fulfilling hopeless eyes with hopeless tears And fleeting light of unforgotten years. Dim clouds of music in the dim rich hours
Float to me thro' the twilight of thine hair,
And sails like blossoms float o'er purple seas,
And under dark green skies the soft warm breeze
Washes dark fruit, dark flowers,
Dark tropic maidens in some island lair
Couched on the warm sand nigh the creaming foam
To dream and sing their tawny lovers home.

Lost in the magic ocean of thine hair
I find the haven of the heart of song:
There tired ships rest against the pale red sky!
And yet again there comes a thin sad cry
And all the shining air
Fades, where the tall dark singing seamen throng
From many generations, many climes,
Fades, fades, as it has faded many times.

I hear the sweet cool whisper of the waves!

Drowned in the slumbrous billows of thine hair,
I dream as one that sinks thro' passionate hours
In a strange ship's wild fraughtage of dark flowers

Culled for pale poets' graves;
And opiate odours load the empurpled air
That flows and droops, a dark resplendent pall
Under the floating wreaths funereal.

Under the heavy midnight of thine hair
An altar flames with spices of the south
Burning my flesh and spirit in the flame;
Till, looking tow'rds the land from whence I came
I find no comfort there,
And all the darkness to my thirsty mouth
Is fire, but always and in every place
Blossoms the secret wonder of thy face.

The walls, the very walls are woven of dreams,
All undefined by blasphemies of art!
Here, pure from finite hues the very night
Conceives the mystic harmonies of light,

Delicious glooms and gleams; And sorrow falls in rose-leaves on the heart, And pain that yearns upon the passing hour Is but a perfume haunting a dead flower.

Hark, as a hammer on a coffin falls

A knock upon the door! The colours wane, The dreams vanish! And leave that foul white scar, Tattoo'd with dreadful marks, the old calendar

Blotching the blistered walls!
The winter whistles thro' a shivered pane,
And scatters on the bare boards at my feet
These poor soiled manuscripts, torn, incomplete. . .

The scent of opium floats about my breath;
But Time resumes his dark and hideous reign;
And, with him, hideous memories troop, I know.
Hark, how the battered clock ticks, to and fro,—
Life, Death—Life, Death—Life, Death—
O fool to cry! O slave to bow to pain,
Coward to live thus tortured with desire
By demon nerves in hells of sensual fire.

THE MYSTIC

With wounds out-reddening every moon-washed rose
King Love went thro' earth's garden-close!
From that first gate of birth in the golden gloom,
I traced Him. Thorns had frayed His garment's hem,
Ay, and His flesh! I marked, I followed them
Down to that threshold of—the tomb?

And there Love vanished, yet I entered! Night
And Doubt mocked at the dwindling light:
Strange claw-like hands flung me their shadowy hate.
I clomb the dreadful stairways of desire
Between a thousand eyes and wings of fire
And knocked upon the second Gate.

The second Gate! When, like a warrior helmed, In battle on battle overwhelmed, My soul lay stabbed by all the swords of sense, Blinded and stunned by stars and flowers and trees, Did I not struggle to my bended knees And wrestle with Omnipotence?

Did earth not flee before me, when the breath Of worship smote her with strange death, Withered her gilded garment, broke her sword, Shattered her graven images and smote All her light sorrows thro' the breast and throat Whose death-cry crowned me God and Lord?

Yea, God and Lord! Had tears not purged my sight? I saw the myriad gates of Light
Opening and shutting in each way-side flower,
And like a warder in the gleam of each,
Death, whispering in some strange eternal speech
To every passing hour.

The second Gate? Was I not born to pass
A million? Though the skies be brass
And the earth iron, shall I not win thro' all?
Shall I who made the infinite heavens my mark
Shrink from this first wild horror of the dark,
These formless gulfs, these glooms that crawl?

Never was mine that easy faithless hope
Which makes all life one flowery slope
To heaven! Mine be the vast assaults of doom,
Trumpets, defeats, red anguish, age-long strife,
Ten million deaths, ten million gates to life,
The insurgent heart that bursts the tomb.

Vain, vain, unutterably vain are all
The sights and sounds that sink and fall,
The words and symbols of this fleeting breath:
Shall I not drown the finite in the Whole,
Cast off this body and complete my soul
Thro' deaths beyond this gate of death?

It will not open! Through the bars I see

The glory and the mystery

Wind upward ever! The earth-dawn breaks! I bleed With beating here for entrance. Hark, O hark, Love, Love, return and give me the great Dark, Which is the Light of Life indeed.

THE FLOWER OF OLD JAPAN

DEDICATED TO CAROL, A LITTLE MAIDEN OF MYAKO.

PERSONS OF THE TALE

THE TALL THIN MAN
THE DWARF BEHIND THE TWISTED PEAR-TREE

CREEPING SIN THE MAD MOONSHEE THE NAMELESS ONE

Pirates, Mandarins, Bonzes, Priests, Jugglers, Merchants, Ghastroi, Weirdrians, etc.

PRELUDE

You that have known the wonder zone Of islands far away: You that have heard the dinky bird And roamed in rich Cathay; You that have sailed o'er unknown seas To woods of Amfalula trees Where craggy dragons play: Oh, girl or woman, boy or man, You've plucked the Flower of Old Japan!

Do you remember the blue stream: The bridge of pale bamboo; The path that seemed a twisted dream Where everything came true; The purple cherry-trees; the house With jutting eaves below the boughs; The mandarins in blue. With tiny, tapping, tilted toes, And curious curved mustachios?

The road to Old Japan! you cry,
And is it far or near?

Some never find it till they die;
Some find it everywhere;
The road where restful Time forgets
His weary thoughts and wild regrets
And calls the golden year
Back in a fairy dream to smile
On young and old a little while.

Some seek it with a blazing sword,
And some with old blue plates;
Some with a miser's golden hoard;
Some with a book of dates;
Some with a box of paints; a few
Whose loads of truth would ne'er pass through
The first, white, fairy gates;
And, oh, how shocked they are to find
That truths are false when left behind!

Do you remember all the tales
That Tusitala told,
When first we plunged thro' purple vales
In quest of buried gold?
Do you remember how he said
That if we fell and hurt our head
Our hearts must still be bold,
And we must never mind the pain
But rise up and go on again?

Do you remember? Yes; I know You must remember still: He left us, not so long ago, Carolling with a will, Because he knew that he should lie Under the comfortable sky Upon a lonely hill, In Old Japan, when day was done; "Dear Robert Louis Stevenson."

And there he knew that he should find The hills that haunt us now;
The whaups that cried upon the wind His heart remembered how;
And friends he loved and left, to roam Far from the pleasant hearth of home, Should touch his dreaming brow;
Where fishes fly and birds have fins, And children teach the mandarins.

Ah, let us follow, follow far
Beyond the purple seas;
Beyond the rosy foaming bar,
The coral reef, the trees,
The land of parrots, and the wild
That rolls before the fearless child
Its ancient mysteries:
Onward and onward, if we can,
To Old Japan—to Old Japan.

PART I

EMBARKATION

When the firelight, red and clear,
Flutters in the black wet pane,
It is very good to hear
Howling winds and trotting rain:
It is very good indeed,
When the nights are dark and cold,
Near the friendly hearth to read
Tales of ghosts and buried gold.

So with cozy toes and hands
We were dreaming, just like you;
Till we thought of palmy lands
Coloured like a cockatoo;
All in drowsy nursery nooks
Near the clutching fire we sat,
Searching quaint old story-books
Piled upon the furry mat.

Something haunted us that night
Like a half-remembered name;
Worn old pages in that light
Seemed the same, yet not the same:
Curling in the pleasant heat
Smoothly as a shell-shaped fan,
O, they breathed and smelt so sweet
When we turned to Old Japan!

Suddenly we thought we heard
Someone tapping on the wall,
Tapping, tapping like a bird.
Then a panel seemed to fall
Quietly; and a tall thin man
Stepped into the glimmering room,
And he held a little fan,
And he waved it in the gloom.

Curious red, and golds, and greens
Danced before our startled eyes,
Birds from painted Indian screens,
Beads, and shells, and dragon-flies;
Wings, and flowers, and scent, and flam
Fans and fish and heliotrope;
Till the magic air became
Like a dream kaleidoscope.

Then he told us of a land
Far across a fairy sea;
And he waved his thin white hand
Like a flower, melodiously;
While a red and blue macaw
Perched upon his pointed head,
And as in a dream, we saw
All the curious things he said.

Tucked in tiny palanquins,
Magically swinging there,
Flowery-kirtled mandarins
Floated through the scented air;

Wandering dogs and prowling cats Grinned at fish in painted lakes; Cross-legged conjurers on mats Fluted low to listening snakes.

Fat black bonzes on the shore
Watched where singing, faint and far,
Boys in long blue garments bore
Roses in a golden jar.
While at carven dragon ships
Floating o'er that silent sea,
Squat-limbed gods with dreadful lips
Leered and smiled mysteriously.

Like an idol, shrined alone,
Watched by secret oval eyes,
Where the ruby wishing-stone
Smouldering in the darkness lies,
Anyone that wanted things
Touched the jewel and they came;
We were wealthier than kings
Could we only do the same.

Yes; we knew a hundred ways
We might use it if we could;
To be happy all our days
As an Indian in a wood;
No more daily lesson task,
No more sorrow, no more care;
So we thought that we would ask
If he'd kindly lead us there.

Ah, but then he waved his fan,
Laughed and vanished through the wall;
Yet as in a dream, we ran
Tumbling after, one and all;
Never pausing once to think,
Panting after him we sped;
Far away his robe of pink
Floated backward as he fled.

Down a secret passage deep,
Under roofs of spidery stairs,
Where the bat-winged nightmares creep,
And a sheeted phantom glares
Rushed we; ah, how strange it was
Where no human watcher stood;
Till we reached a gate of glass
Opening on a flowery wood.

Where the rose-pink robe had flown,
Borne by swifter feet than ours,
On to Wonder-Wander town,
Through the wood of monstrous flowers;
Mailed in monstrous gold and blue
Dragon-flies like peacocks fled;
Butterflies like carpets, too,
Softly fluttered overhead.

Down the valley, tip-a-toe,
Where the broad-limbed giants lie
Snoring, as when long ago
Jack on a bean-stalk scaled the sky;
On to Wonder-Wander town
Stole we past old dreams again,
Castles long since battered down,
Dungeons of forgotten pain.

Noonday brooded on the wood,
Evening caught us ere we crept
Where a twisted pear-tree stood,
And a dwarf behind it slept;
Round his scraggy throat he wore,
Knotted tight, a scarlet scarf;
Timidly we watched him snore,
For he seemed a surly dwarf.

Yet, he looked so very small, He could hardly hurt us much; We were nearly twice as tall, So we woke him with a touch Gently, and in tones polite,
Asked him to direct our path;
O, his wrinkled eyes grew bright
Green with ugly gnomish wrath.

He seemed to choke,
And gruffly spoke,

"You're lost: deny it, if you can!
You want to know
The way to go?
There's no such place as Old Japan.

"You want to seek—
No, no, don't speak!
You mean you want to steal a fan.
You want to see
The fields of tea?
They don't grow tea in Old Japan.

"In China, well
Perhaps you'd smell
The cherry bloom: that's if you ran
A million miles
And jumped the stiles,
And never dreamed of Old Japan.

"What, palanquins,
And mandarins?
And, what d'you say, a blue divan?
And what? Hee! hee!
You'll never see
A pig-tailed head in Old Japan.

"You'd take away
The ruby, hey?
I never heard of such a plan!
Upon my word
It's quite absurd
There's not a gem in Old Japan!

"Oh, dear me, no!
You'd better go
Straight home again, my little man:
Ah, well, you'll see
But don't blame me;
I don't believe in Old Japan."

Then, before we could obey,
O'er our startled heads he cast,
Spider-like, a webby grey
Net that held us prisoned fast;
How we screamed, he only grinned,
It was such a lonely place;
And he said we should be pinned
Safely in his beetle-case.

Out he dragged a monstrous box
From a cave behind the tree!
It had four-and-twenty locks,
But he could not find the key,
And his face grew very pale
When a sudden voice began
Drawing nearer through the vale,
Singing songs of Old Japan.

SONG

Satin sails in a crimson dawn
Over the silky silver sea;
Purple veils of the dark withdrawn;
Heavens of pearl and porphyry;
Purple and white in the morning light
Over the water the town we knew,
In tiny state, like a willow-plate,
Shone, and behind it the hills were blue.

There, we remembered, the shadows pass All day long like dreams in the night; There, in the meadows of dim blue grass, Crimson daisies are ringed with white. There the roses flutter their petals,
Over the meadows they take their flight,
There the moth that sleepily settles
Turns to a flower in the warm soft light.

There when the sunset colours the streets
Everyone buys at wonderful stalls
Toys and chocolates, guns and sweets,
Ivory pistols, and Persian shawls:
Everyone's pockets are crammed with gold;
Nobody's heart is worn with care,
Nobody ever grows tired and old,
And nobody calls you "Baby" there.

There with a hat like a round white dish
Upside down on each pig-tailed head,
Jugglers offer you snakes and fish,
Dreams and dragons and gingerbread;
Beautiful books with marvellous pictures,
Painted pirates and streaming gore,
And everyone reads, without any strictures,
Tales he remembers for evermore.

There when the dim blue daylight lingers
Listening, and the West grows holy,
Singers crouch with their long white fingers
Floating over the zithern slowly:
Paper lamps with a peachy bloom
Burn above on the dim blue bough,
While the zitherns gild the gloom
With curious music! I hear it now!

Now: and at that mighty word
Holding out his magic fan,
Through the waving flowers appeared,
Suddenly, the tall thin man:
And we saw the crumpled dwarf
Trying to hide behind the tree,
But his knotted scarlet scarf
Made him very plain to see.

Like a soft and smoky cloud
Passed the webby net away;
While its owner squealing loud
Down behind the pear-tree lay;
For the tall thin man came near,
And his words were dark and gruff,
And he swung the dwarf in the air
By his long and scraggy scruff.

There he kickled whimpering.

But our rescuer touched the box,
Open with a sudden spring
Clashed the four-and-twenty locks;
Then he crammed the dwarf inside,
And the locks all clattered tight:
Four-and-twenty times he tried
Whether they were fastened right.

Ah, he led us on our road,
Showed us Wonder-Wander town;
Then he fled: behind him flowed
Once again the rose-pink gown:
Down the long deserted street,
All the windows winked like eyes,
And our little trotting feet
Echoed to the starry skies.

Low and long for evermore
Where the Wonder-Wander sea
Whispers to the wistful shore
Purple songs of mystery,
Down the shadowy quay we came—
Though it hides behind the hill
You will find it just the same
And the seamen singing still.

There we chose a ship of pearl, And her milky silken sail Seemed by magic to unfurl, Puffed before a fairy gale; Shimmering o'er the purple deep, Out across the silvery bar, Softly as the wings of sleep Sailed we towards the morning star.

Over us the skies were dark,
Yet we never needed light;
Softly shone our tiny bark
Gliding through the solemn night;
Softly bright our moony gleam,
Glimmered o'er the glistening waves,
Like a cold sea-maiden's dream
Globed in twilit ocean caves.

So all night our shallop passed
Many a haunt of old desire,
Blurs of savage blossom massed
Red above a pirate-fire;
Huts that gloomed and glanced among
Fruitage dipping in the blue;
Songs the sirens never sung,
Shores Ulysses never knew.

All our fairy rigging shone
Richly as a rainbow seen
Where the moonlight floats upon
Gossamers of gold and green:
All the tiny spars were bright;
Beaten gold the bowsprit was;
But our pilot was the night,
And our chart a looking-glass.

PART II

THE ARRIVAL

With rosy finger-tips the Dawn Drew back the silver veils, Till lilae shimmered into lawn Above the satin sails; And o'er the waters, white and wan, In tiny patterned state, We saw the streets of Old Japan Shine, like a willow plate.

O, many a milk-white pigeon roams
The purple cherry crops,
The mottled miles of pearly domes,
And blue pagoda tops,
The river with its golden canes
And dark piratic dhows,
To where beyond the twisting vares
The burning mountain glows.

A snow-peak in the silver skies
Beyond that magic world,
We saw the great volcano rise
With incense o'er it curled,
Whose tiny thread of rose and blue
Has risen since time began,
Before the first enchanter knew
The peak of Old Japan.

Nobody watched us quietly steer
The pinnace to the painted pier,
Except one pig-tailed mandarin,
Who sat upon a chest of tea
Pretending not to hear or see! . . .
His hands were very long and thin,
His face was very broad and white;
And O, it was a fearful sight
To see him sit alone and grin!

His grin was very sleek and sly:
Timidly we passed him by.
He did not seem at all to care:
So, thinking we were safely past,
We ventured to look back at last.
O, dreadful blank!—He was not there!
He must have hid behind his chest:
We did not stay to see the rest.

But, as in reckless haste we ran,
We came upon the tall thin man,
Who called to us and waved his fan,
And offered us his palanquin:
He said we must not go alone
To seek the ruby wishing-stone,
Because the white-faced mandarin
Would dog our steps for many a mile,
And sit upon each purple stile
Before we came to it, and smile
And smile; his name was Creeping Sin.

He played with children's beating hearts,
And stuck them full of poisoned darts
And long green thorns that stabbed and stung:
He'd watch until we tried to speak,
Then thrust inside his pasty cheek
His long, white, slimy tongue:
And smile at everything we said;
And sometimes pat us on the head,
And say that we were very young:
He was a cousin of the man
Who said that there was no Japan.

And night and day this Creeping Sin
Would follow the path of the palanquin;
Yet if we still were fain to touch
The ruby, we must have no fear,
Whatever we might see or hear,
And the tall thin man would take us there;
He did not fear that Sly One much,
Except perhaps on a moonless night,
Nor even then if the stars were bright.

So, in the yellow palankeen
We swung along in state between
Twinkling domes of gold and green
Through the rich bazaar,

Where the cross-legged merchants sat, Old and almond-eyed and fat, Each upon a gorgeous mat, Each in a cymar; Each in crimson samite breeches, Watching his barbaric riches.

Cherry blossom breathing sweet
Whispered o'er the dim blue street
Where with fierce uncertain feet
Tawny pirates walk:
All in belts and baggy blouses,
Out of dreadful opium houses,
Out of dens where Death carouses,
Horribly they stalk;
Girt with ataghan and dagger,
Right across the road they swagger.

And where the cherry orchards blow, We saw the maids of Miyako, Swaying softly to and fro

Through the dimness of the dance: Like sweet thoughts that shine through dreams They glided, wreathing rosy gleams, With stately sounds of silken streams,

And many a slim kohl-lidded glance; Then fluttered with tiny rose-bud feet To a soft frou-frou and a rhythmic beat As the music shimmered, pursuit, retreat,

"Hands across, retire, advance!"
And again it changed and the glimmering throng
Faded into a distant song.

SONG

The maidens of Miyako
Dance in the sunset hours,
Deep in the sunset glow,
Under the cherry flowers.

With dreamy hands of pearl Floating like butterflies, Dimly the dancers whirl As the rose-light dies;

And their floating gowns, their hair Upbound with curious pins, Fade thro' the darkening air With the dancing mandarins.

And then, as we went, the tall thin man Explained the manners of Old Japan;
If you pitied a thing, you pretended to sneer;
Yet if you were glad you ran to buy
A captive pigeon and let it fly;
And, if you were sad, you took a spear
To wound yourself, for fear your pain
Should quietly grow less again.

And, again he said, if we wished to find The mystic City that enshrined
The stone so few on earth had found,
We must be very brave; it lay
A hundred haunted leagues away,
Past many a griffon-guarded ground,
In depths of dark and curious art,
Where passion-flowers enfold apart
The Temple of the Flaming Heart,
The City of the Secret Wound.

About the fragrant fall of day
We saw beside the twisted way
A blue-domed tea-house, bossed with gold;
Hungry and thirsty we entered in,
How should we know what Creeping Sin
Had breathed in that Emperor's ear who sold
His own dumb soul for an evil jewel
To the earth-gods, blind and ugly and cruel?
We drank sweet tea as his tale was told,
In a garden of blue chrysanthemums,
While a drowsy swarming of gongs and drums
Out of the sunset dreamily rolled.

But, as the murmur nearer drew,
A fat black bonze, in a robe of blue,
Suddenly at the gate appeared;
And close behind, with that evil grin,
Was it Creeping Sin, was it Creeping Sin?
The bonze looked quietly down and sneered.
Our guide! Was he sleeping? We could not
wake him,
However we tried to pinch and shake him!

Nearer, nearer the tumult came,
Till, as a glare of sound and flame,
Blind from a terrible furnace door
Blares, or the mouth of a dragon, blazed
The seething gateway: deaf and dazed
With the clanging and the wild uproar
We stood; while a thousand oval eyes
Gapped our fear with a sick surmise.

Then, as the dead sea parted asunder,
The clamour clove with a sound of thunder
In two great billows; and all was quiet.
Gaunt and black was the palankeen
That came in dreadful state between
The frozen waves of the wild-eyed riot
Curling back from the breathless track
Of the Nameless One who is never seen:
The close drawn curtains were thick and black;
But wizen and white was the tall thin man
As he rose in his sleep:
His eyes were closed, his lips were wan,
He crouched like a leopard that dares not
leap.

The bearers halted: the tall thin man,
Fearfully dreaming, waved his fan,
With wizard fingers, to and fro;
While, with a whimper of evil glee,
The Nameless Emperor's mad Moonshee
Stepped in front of us: dark and slow

Were the words of the doom that he dared not name;

But, over the ground, as he spoke there came Tiny circles of soft blue flame:

Like ghosts of flowers they began to glow, And flow like a moonlit brook between Our feet and the terrible palankeen.

But the Moonshee wrinkled his long thin eyes, And sneered, "Have you stolen the strength of the skies?

Then pour before us a stream of pearl!
Give us the pearl and the gold we know,
And our hearts will be softened and let you go;
But these are toys for a foolish girl—
These vanishing blossoms—what are they worth?
They are not so heavy as dust and earth:
Pour before us a stream of pearl!"

Then, with a wild strange laugh, our guide
Stretched his arms to the West and cried
Once, and a song came over the sea;
And all the blossoms of moon-soft fire
Woke and breathed as a wind-swept lyre,
And the garden surged into harmony;
Till it seemed that the soul of the whole world
sung,

And every petal became a tongue To tell the thoughts of Eternity.

But the Moonshee lifted his painted brows
And stared at the gold on the blue tea-house:
"Can you clothe your body with dreams?"
he sneered;

"If you taught us the truths that we alway know

Our heart might be softened and let you go:

Can you tell us the length of a monkey beard,

Or the weight of the gems on the Emperor's fan, Or the number of parrots in Old Japan?" And again, with a wild strange laugh, our guide Looked at him; and he shrunk aside,

Shrivelling like a flame-touched leaf; For the red-cross blossoms of soft blue fire Were growing and fluttering higher and higher, Shaking their petals out, sheaf by sheaf,

Till with disks like shields and stems like towers Burned the host of the passion-flowers

. . . . Had the Moonshee flown like a midnight thief?

. . . Yet a thing like a monkey, shrivelled and black,

Chattered and danced as they forced him back.

As the coward chatters for empty pride,
In the face of a foe that he cannot but fear,
It chattered and leapt from side to side,
And its voice rang strangely upon the ear.
As the cry of a wizard that dares not own

As the cry of a wizard that dares not own Another's brighter and mightier throne; As the wrath of a fool that rails aloud

On the fire that burnt him; the brazen bray Clamoured and sang o'er the gaping crowd, And flapped like a gabbling goose away.

THE CRY OF THE MAD MOONSHEE

If the blossoms were beans,
I should know what it means—
This blaze, which I certainly cannot endure;
It is evil, too,
For its colour is blue,

And the sense of the matter is quite obscure.

Celestial truth

Is the food of youth;

But the music was dark as a moonless night.
The facts in the song
Were all of them wrong,

And there was not a single sum done right; Tho' a metaphysician amongst the crowd, In a voice that was notably deep and loud, Repeated, as fast as he was able, The whole of the multiplication table.

So the cry flapped off as a wild goose flies,
And the stars came out in the trembling skies,
And ever the mystic glory grew
In the garden of blue chrysanthemums,
Till there came a rumble of distant drums;
And the multitude suddenly turned and flew.
. . . A dead ape lay where their feet had

been . . .
And we called for the yellow palankeen,
And the flowers divided and let us through.

The black-barred moon was large and low When we came to the Forest of Ancient Woe; And over our heads the stars were bright. But through the forest the path we travelled Its phosphorescent aisle unravelled In one thin ribbon of dwindling light: And twice and thrice on the fainting track We paused to listen. The moon grew black, But the coolies' faces glimmered white.

As the wild woods echoed in dreadful chorus
A laugh that came horribly hopping o'er us
Like monstrous frogs thro' the murky night.

Then the tall thin man as we swung along Sang us an old enchanted song

That lightened our hearts of their fearful load. But, e'en as the moonlit air grew sweet, We heard the pad of stealthy feet

Dogging us down the thin white road;
And the song grew weary again and harsh,
And the black trees dripped like the fringe of a
marsh,

And a laugh crept out like a shadowy toad; And we knew it was neither ghoul nor djinn: It was Creeping Sin! It was Creeping Sin! But we came to a bend, and the white moon glowed

Like a gate at the end of the narrowing road
Far away; and on either hand,
As guards of a path to the heart's desire,
The strange tall blossoms of soft blue fire
Stretched away thro' that unknown land,
League on league with their dwindling lane
Down to the large low moon; and again
There shimmered around us that mystical strain,
In a tongue that it seemed we could understand.

SONG

Hold by right and rule by fear Till the slowly broadening sphere Melting through the skies above Merge into the sphere of love.

Hold by might until you find Might is powerless o'er the mind: Hold by Truth until you see, Though they bow before the wind, Its towers can mock at liberty.

Time, the seneschal, is blind; Time is blind: and what are we? Captives of Infinity, Claiming through Truth's prison bars Kinship with the wandering stars.

O, who could tell the wild weird sights
We saw in all the days and nights
We travelled through those forests old.
We saw the griffons on white cliffs,
Among fantastic hieroglyphs,
Guarding enormous heaps of gold:

We saw the Ghastroi—curious men
Who dwell, like tigers, in a den,
And howl whene'er the moon is cold;
They stripe themselves with red and black
And ride upon the yellow Yak.

Their dens are always ankle-deep
With twisted knives, and in their sleep
They often cut themselves; they say
That if you wish to live in peace
The surest way is not to cease
Collecting knives; and never a day
Can pass, unless they buy a few;
And as their enemies buy them too
They all avert the impending fray,
And starve their children and their wives
To buy the necessary knives.

The forest leapt with shadowy shapes As we came to the great black Tower of

Apes:
But we gave them purple figs and grapes
In alabaster amphoras:
We gave them curious kinds of fruit
With betel nuts and orris-root,
And then they let us pass:
And when we reached the Tower of Snakes
We gave them soft white honey-cakes,
And warm sweet milk in bowls of brass:
And on the hundredth eve we found
The City of the Secret Wound.

We saw the mystic blossoms blow Round the City, far below; Faintly in the sunset glow We saw the soft blue glory flow O'er many a golden garden gate: And o'er the tiny dark green seas Of tamarisks and tulip-trees, Domes like golden oranges Dream aloft elate.

And clearer, clearer as we went,
We heard from tower and battlement
A whisper, like a warning, sent
From watchers out of sight;
And clearer, brighter, as we drew
Close to the walls, we saw the blue
Flashing of plumes where peacocks flew
Thro' zones of pearly light.

On either side, a fat black bonze
Guarded the gates of red-wrought bronze,
Blazoned with blue sea-dragons
And mouths of yawning flame;
Down the road of dusty red,
Though their brown feet ached and bled,
Our coolies went with joyful tread:
Like living fans the gates outspread
And opened as we came.

PART III

THE MYSTIC RUBY

The white moon dawned; the sunset died;
And stars were trembling when we spied
The rose-red temple of our dreams:
Its lamp-lit gardens glimmered cool
With many an onyx-paven pool,
Amid soft sounds of flowing streams;
Where star-shine shimmered through the white
Tall fountain-shafts of crystal light
In ever changing rainbow-gleams.

Priests in flowing yellow robes
Glided under rosy globes
Through the green pomegranate boughs
Moonbeams poured their coloured rain;
Roofs of sea-green porcelain
Jutted o'er the rose-red house;
Bells were hung beneath its caves;
Every wind that stirred the leaves

The temple had a low broad base
Of black bright marble; all its face
Was marble bright in rosy bloom;
And where two sea-green pillars rose
Deep in the flower-soft eave-shadows
We saw, thro' richly sparkling gloom,
Wrought in marvellous years of old
With bulls and peacocks bossed in gold,
The doors of powdered lacquer loom.

Tinkled as tired water does.

Quietly then the tall thin man,
Holding his turquoise-tinted fan,
Alighted from the palanquin;
We followed: never painter dreamed
Of how that dark rich temple gleamed
With gules of jewelled gloom within;
And as we wondered near the door
A priest came o'er the polished floor
In sandals of soft serpent-skin;
His mitre shimmered bright and blue
With pigeon's breast-plumes. When he knew
Our quest he stroked his broad white chin,
And looked at us with slanting eyes
And smiled; then through his deep disguise
We knew him! It was Creeping Sin!

But cunningly he bowed his head Down on his gilded breast and said Come: and he led us through the dusk Of passages whose painted walls Gleamed with dark old festivals; Till where the gloom grew sweet with musk And incense, through a door of amber We came into a high-arched chamber.

There on a throne of jasper sat A monstrous idol, black and fat; Thick rose-oil dropped upon its head: Drop by drop, heavy and sweet, Trickled down to its ebon feet

Whereon the blood of goats was shed, And smeared around its perfumed knees In savage midnight mysteries.

It wore about its bulging waist
A belt of dark green bronze enchased
With big, soft, cloudy pearls; its wrists
Were clasped about with moony gems
Gathered from dead kings' diadems;

Its throat was ringed with amethysts, And in its awful hand it held A softly smouldering emerald.

Silkily murmured Creeping Sin,
"This is the stone you wished to win!"
"White Snake," replied the tall thin man,
"Show us the Ruby Stone, or I
Will slay thee with my hands." The sly
Long eyelids of the priest began
To slant aside; and then once more
He led us through the fragrant door.

And now along the passage walls
Were painted hideous animals,
With hooded eyes and cloven stings:
In the incense that like shadowy hair
Streamed over them they seemed to stir
Their craggy claws and crooked wings.
At last we saw strange moon-wreaths curl
Around a deep, soft porch of pearl.

O, what enchanter wove in dreams
That chapel wild with shadowy gleams
And prismy colours of the moon?
Shrined like a rainbow in a mist
Of flowers, the fretted amethyst
Arches rose to a mystic tune;
And never mortal art inlaid
Those cloudy floors of sea-soft jade.

There, in the midst, an idol rose
White as the silent starlit snows
On lonely Himalayan heights:
Over its head the spikenard spilled
Down to its feet, with myrrh distilled
In distant, odorous Indian nights:
It held before its ivory face
A flaming yellow chrysoprase.

O, silkily murmured Creeping Sin,
"This is the stone you wished to win."
But in his ear the tall thin man
Whispered with slow, strange lips—we knew
Not what, but Creeping Sin went blue
With fear; again his eyes began
To slant aside; then through the porch
He passed, and lit a tall, brown torch.

Down a corridor dark as death,
With beating hearts and bated breath
We hurried; far away we heard
A dreadful hissing, fierce as fire
When rain begins to quench a pyre;
And where the smoky torch-light flared
Strange vermin beat their bat-like wings,
And the wet walls dropped with slimy things.

And darker, darker, wound the way, Beyond all gleams of night and day, And still that hideous hissing grew Louder and louder on our ears, And tortured us with eyeless fears; Then suddenly the gloom turned blue, And, in the wall, a rough rock cave Gaped, like a phosphorescent grave.

And from the purple mist within
There came a wild tumultuous din
Of snakes that reared their heads and hissed
As if a witch's cauldron boiled;
All round the door great serpents coiled,
With eyes of glowing amethyst,
Whose fierce blue flames began to slide
Like shooting stars from side to side.

Ah! with a sickly gasping grin
And quivering eyelids, Creeping Sin
Stole to the cave; but, suddenly,
As through its glimmering mouth he passed,
The serpents flashed and gripped him fast:
He wriggled and gave one awful cry,
Then all at once the cave was cleared;
The snakes with their victim had disappeared.

And fearlessly the tall thin man
Opened his turquoise-tinted fan
And entered; and the mists grew bright,
And we saw that the cave was a diamond hall
Lit with lamps for a festival.

A myriad globes of coloured light Went gliding deep in its massy sides, Like the shimmering moons in the glassy tides Where a sea-king's palace enchants the night.

Gliding and flowing, a glory and wonder,
Through each other, and over, and under,
The lucent orbs of green and gold,
Bright with sorrow or soft with sleep,
In music through the glimmering deep,
Over their secret axles rolled,
And circled by the murmuring spheres
We saw in a frame of frozen tears
A mirror that made the blood run cold.

For, when we came to it, we found
It imaged everything around
Except the face that gazed in it;
And where the mirrored face should be
A heart-shaped Ruby fierily
Smouldered; and round the frame was writ,
Mystery: Time and Tide shall pass,
I am the Wisdom Looking-Glass.

This is the Ruby none can touch:
Many have loved it overmuch;
Its fathomless fires flutter and sigh,
Being as images of the flame
That shall make earth and heaven the same
When the fire of the end reddens the sky,
And the world consumes like a burning pall,
Till where there is nothing, there is all.

So we looked up at the tall thin man And we saw that his face grew sad and wan:
Tears were glistening in his eyes:
At last, with a breaking sob, he bent
His head upon his breast and went
Swiftly away! With dreadful cries
We rushed to the softly glimmering door
And stared at the hideous corridor.
But his robe was gone as a dream that flies:
Back to the glass in terror we came,
And stared at the writing round the frame.

We could not understand one word:
And suddenly we thought we heard
The hissing of the snakes again:
How could we front them all alone?
O, madly we clutched at the mirrored stone
And wished we were back on the flowery plain:
And swifter than thought and swift as fear
The whole world flashed, and behold we were there.

Yes; there was the port of Old Japan, With its twisted patterns, white and wan, Shining like a mottled fan

Spread by the blue sea, faint and far; And far away we heard once more A sound of singing on the shore, Where boys in blue kimonos bore

Roses in a golden jar:

And we heard, where the cherry orchards blow, The serpent-charmers fluting low, And the song of the maidens of Miyako.

And at our feet unbroken lay
The glass that had whirled us thither away:
And in the grass, among the flowers
We sat and wished all sorts of things:
O, we were wealthier than kings!
We ruled the world for several hours!
And then, it seemed, we knew not why,
All the daisies began to die.

We wished them alive again; but soon
The trees all fled up towards the moon
Like peacocks through the sunlit air:
And the butterflies flapped into silver fish;
And each wish spoiled another wish;
Till we threw the glass down in despair;
For, getting whatever you want to get,
Is like drinking tea from a fishing net.

At last we thought we'd wish once more
That all should be as it was before;
And then we'd shatter the glass, if we could;
But just as the world grew right again,
We heard a wanderer out on the plain
Singing what none of us understood;
Yet we thought that the world grew thrice more sweet
And the meadows were blossoming under his feet.

And we felt a grand and beautiful fear,
For we knew that a marvellous thought drew near;
So we kept the glass for a little while:
And the skies grew deeper and twice as bright,
And the seas grew soft as a flower of light,
And the meadows rippled from stile to stile;
And memories danced in a musical throng
Thro' the blossom that scented the wonderful song.

SONG

We sailed across the silver seas
And saw the sea-blue bowers,
We saw the purple cherry trees,
And all the foreign flowers,
We travelled in a palanquin
Beyond the caravan,
And yet our hearts had never seen
The Flower of Old Japan.

The Flower above all other flowers,
The Flower that never dies;
Before whose throne the scented hours
Offer their sacrifice;
The Flower that here on earth below
Reveals the heavenly plan;
But only little children know
The Flower of Old Japan.

There, in the dim blue flowery plain
We wished with the magic glass again
To go to the Flower of the song's desire:
And o'er us the whole of the soft blue sky
Flashed like fire as the world went by,
And far beneath us the sea like fire
Flashed in one swift blue brilliant stream,
And the journey was done, like a change in a dream.

PART IV

THE END OF THE QUEST

Like the dawn upon a dream
Slowly through the scented gloom
Crept once more the ruddy gleam
O'er the friendly nursery room.
There, before our waking eyes,
Large and ghostly, white and dim,
Dreamed the Flower that never dies,
Opening wide its rosy rim.

Spreading like a ghostly fan,
Petals white as porcelain,
There the Flower of Old Japan
Told us we were home again;
For a soft and curious light
Suddenly was o'er it shed,
And we saw it was a white
English daisy, ringed with red.

Slowly, as a wavering mist
Waned the wonder out of sight,
To a sigh of amethyst,
To a wraith of scented light.
Flower and magic glass had gone;
Near the clutching fire we sat
Dreaming, dreaming, all alone,
Each upon a furry mat.

While the firelight, red and clear,
Fluttered in the black wet pane,
It was very good to hear
Howling winds and trotting rain.
For we found at last we knew
More than all our fancy planned,
All the fairy tales were true,
And home the heart of fairyland.

EPILOGUE

Carol, every violet has Heaven for a looking-glass!

Every little valley lies
Under many-clouded skies;
Every little cottage stands
Girt about with boundless lands.
Every little glimmering pond
Claims the mighty shores beyond—
Shores no seamen ever hailed,
Seas no ship has ever sailed.

All the shores when day is done Fade into the setting sun, So the story tries to teach More than can be told in speech.

Beauty is a fading flower, Truth is but a wizard's tower, Where a solemn death-bell tolls, And a forest round it rolls.

We have come by curious ways To the Light that holds the days; We have sought in haunts of fear For that all-enfolding sphere: And lo! it was not far, but near.

We have found, O foolish-fond, The shore that has no shore beyond.

Deep in every heart it lies With its untranscended skies; For what heaven should bend above Hearts that own the heaven of love?

Carol, Carol, we have come Back to heaven, back to home.

APES AND IVORY

Ares and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old Hong-Kong, Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of song, Masts of gold and sails of satin, shimmering out of the East, O, Love has little need of you now to make his heart a feast.

Or is it an elephant, white as milk and bearing a severed head That tatters his broad soft wrinkled flank in tawdry patches of red,

With a negro giant to walk beside and a temple dome above, Where ruby and emerald shatter the sun,—is it these that should please my love?

Or is it a palace of pomegranates, where ivory-limbed young slaves

Lure a luxury out of the noon in the swooning fountain's waves:

Or couch like cats and sun themselves on the warm white marble brink?

O, Love has little to ask of these, this day in May, I think.

Is it Lebanon cedars or purple fruits of the honeyed southron air,

Spikenard, saffron, roses of Sharon, cinnamon, calamus, myrrh, A bed of spices, a fountain of waters, or the wild white wings of a dove.

Now, when the winter is over and gone, is it these that should please my love?

The leaves outburst on the hazel-bough and the hawthorn's heaped wi' flower,

And God has bidden the crisp clouds build my love a lordlier tower,

Taller than Lebanon, whiter than snow, in the fresh blue skies above:

And the wild rose wakes in the winding lanes of the radiant land I love.

Apes and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old Hong-Kong, Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of song, Masts of gold and sails of satin, shimmering out of the East, O, Love has little need of you now to make his heart a feast.

A SONG OF SHERWOOD

SHERWOOD in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake? Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake, Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn, Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again: all his merry thieves Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves, Calling as he used to call, faint and far away, In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June: All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the moon, Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Merry, merry England is waking as of old, With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold: For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting spray In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs: Love is in the greenwood, dawn is in the skies, And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes.

Hark! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden steep! Marian is waiting: is Robin Hood asleep? Round the fairy grass-rings frolic elf and fay, In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold, Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould, Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red, And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed. Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose-feather. The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled away In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows. All the heart of England hid in every rose Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper leap, Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old And, shattering the silence with a cry of brighter gold Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep, Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Where the deer are gliding down the shadowy glen All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men— Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the May In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day—

Calls them and they answer: from aisles of oak and ash Rings the Follow! Follow! and the boughs begin to crash, The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin to fly, And through the crimson dawning the robber band goes by.

Robin! Robin! Robin! All his merry thieves Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the leaves, Calling as he used to call, faint and far away, In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

THE WORLD'S MAY-QUEEN

Ι

Whither away is the Spring to-day?

To England, to England!
In France they heard the South wind say,
"She's off on a quest for a Queen o' the May,
So she's over the hills far away,
To England!"

And why did she fly with her golden feet
To England, to England?
In Italy, too, they heard the sweet
Roses whisper and flutter and beat—
"She's an old and a true, true love to greet
In England!"

A moon ago there came a cry
From England, from England,
Faintly, fondly it faltered nigh
The throne of the Spring in the Southern sky,
And it whispered "Come," and the world went by,
And with one long loving blissful sigh
The Spring was away to England!

II

When Spring comes back to England
And crowns her brows with May,
Round the merry moonlit world
She goes the greenwood way:
She throws a rose to Italy,
A fleur-de-lys to France;
But round her regal morris-ring
The seas of England dance.

When Spring comes back to England
And dons her robe of green,
There's many a nation garlanded
But England is the Queen;
She's Queen, she's Queen of all the world
Beneath the laughing sky,
For the nations go a-Maying
When they hear the New Year cry—

"Come over the water to England, My old love, my new love, Come over the water to England, In showers of flowery rain; Come over the water to England, April, my true love; And tell the heart of England The Spring is here again!"

III

So it's here, she is here with her eyes of blue
In England, in England!
She has brought us the rainbows with her, too,
And a glory of shimmering glimmering dew
And a heaven of quivering scent and hue
And a lily for me and a rose for you
In England.

There's many a wanderer far away
From England, from England,
Will toss upon his couch and say—
Though Spain is proud and France is gay,
And there's many a foot on the primrose way,
The world has never a Queen o' the May
But England.

IV

When Drake went out to seek for gold
Across the uncharted sea,
And saw the Western skies unfold
Their veils of mystery;
To lure him through the fevered hours
As nigh to death he lay,
There floated o'er the foreign flowers
A breath of English May:

And back to Devon shores again
His dreaming spirit flew
Over the splendid Spanish Main
To haunts his childhood knew,
Whispering "God forgive the blind
Desire that bade me roam,
I've sailed around the world to find
The sweetest way to home."

V

And it's whither away is the Spring to-day?

To England, to England!

In France you'll hear the South wind say,

"She off on a quest for a Queen o' the May,
So she's over the hills and far away,

To England!"

She's flown with the swallows across the sea
To England, to England!
For there's many a land of the brave and free
But never a home o' the hawthorn-tree,
And never a Queen o' the May for me
But England!

And round the fairy revels whirl
In England, in England!
And the buds outbreak and the leaves unfurl,
And where the crisp white cloudlets curl
The Dawn comes up like a primrose girl
With a crowd of flowers in a basket of pearl
For England!

PIRATES

Come to me, you with the laughing face, in the night as I lie Dreaming of days that are dead and of joys gone by;
Come to me, comrade, come through the slow-dropping rain,
Come from your grave in the darkness and let us be pirates again.

Let us be boys together to-night, and pretend as of old We are pirates at rest in a cave among huge heaps of gold, Red Spanish doubloons and great pieces of eight, and muskets and swords,

And a smoky red camp-fire to glint, you know how, on our illgotten hoards. The old cave in the fir-wood that slopes down the hills to the sea

Still is haunted, perhaps, by young pirates as wicked as we: Though the fir with the magpie's big mud-plastered nest used

to hide it so well,

And the boys in the gang had to swear that they never would tell.

Ah, that tree; I have sat in its boughs and looked seaward for hours.

I remember the creak of its branches, the scent of the flowers That climbed round the mouth of the cave. It is odd I recall Those little things best, that I scarcely took heed of at all.

I remember how brightly the brass on the butt of my spy-glass gleamed

As I climbed through the purple heather and thyme to our eyrie and dreamed;

I remember the smooth glossy sun-burn that darkened our faces and hands

As we gazed at the merchantmen sailing away to those wonderful lands.

I remember the long, slow sigh of the sea as we raced in the sun,

To dry ourselves after our swimming; and how we would run With a cry and a crash through the foam as it creamed on the shore,

Then back to bask in the warm dry gold of the sand once more.

Come to me, you with the laughing face, in the gloom as I lie Dreaming of days that are dead and of joys gone by; Let us be boys together to-night and pretend as of old We are pirates at rest in a cave among great heaps of gold.

Come; you shall be chief. We'll not quarrel, the time flies so fast.

There are ships to be grappled, there's blood to be shed, ere our playtime be past.

No; perhaps we will quarrel, just once, or it scarcely will seem So like the old days that have flown from us both like a dream.

Still; you shall be chief in the end; and then we'll go home To the hearth and the tea and the books that we loved: ah, but come,

Come to me, come through the night and the slow-dropping

Come, old friend, come thro' the darkness and let us be playmates again.

A SONG OF ENGLAND

THERE is a song of England that none shall ever sing; So sweet it is and fleet it is

That none whose words are not as fleet as birds upon the wing,

> And regal as her mountains, And radiant as the fountains

Of rainbow-coloured sea-spray that every wave can fling Against the cliffs of England, the sturdy cliffs of England, Could more than seem to dream of it,

Or eatch one flying gleam of it,

Above the seas of England that never cease to sing.

There is a song of England that only lovers know; So rare it is and fair it is,

O, like a fairy rose it is upon a drift of snow,
So cold and sweet and sunny,
So full of hidden honey.

So like a flight of butterflies where rose and lily blow Along the lanes of England, the leafy lanes of England;

When flowers are at their vespers And full of little whispers.

The boys and girls of England shall sing it as they go.

There is a song of England that only love may sing, So sure it is and pure it is:

And seaward with the sea-mew it spreads a whiter wing,
And with the sky-lark hovers

Above the tryst of lovers,

Above the kiss and whisper that led the lovely Spring

Through all the glades of England, the ferny glades of England, Until the way enwound her

With sprays of May, and crowned her With stars of frosty blossom in a merry morris-ring.

There is a song of England that haunts her hours of rest:

The calm of it and balm of it

Are breathed from every hedgerow that blushes to the West*

From the cottage doors that nightly

Cast their welcome out so brightly

On the lanes where laughing children are lifted and caressed By the tenderest hands in England, hard and blistered hands of England:

> And from the restful sighing Of the sleepers that are lying

With the arms of God around them on the night's contented breast.

There is a song of England that wanders on the wind; So sad it is and glad it is

That men who hear it madden and their eyes are wet and blind, For the lowlands and the highlands

Of the unforgotten islands,

For the Islands of the Blesséd and the rest they cannot find As they grope in dreams to England and the love they left in England;

> Little feet that danced to meet them And the lips that used to greet them,

And the watcher at the window in the home they left behind.

There is a song of England that thrills the beating blood With burning cries and yearning

Tides of hidden aspiration hardly known or understood;

Aspirations of the creature Tow'rds the unity of Nature;

Sudden chivalries revealing whence the longing is renewed In the men that live for England, live and love and die for England:

> By the light of their desire They shall blindly blunder higher,

To a wider, grander Kingdom and a deeper, nobler Good.

There is a song of England that only heaven can hear; So gloriously victorious.

It soars above the choral stars that sing the Golden Year;
Till even the cloudy shadows
That wander o'er her meadows

In silent purple harmonies declare His glory there,

Along the hills of England, the billowy hills of England; While heaven rolls and ranges

Through all the myriad changes

That mirror God in music to the mortal eye and ear.

There is a song of England that none shall ever sing; So sweet it is and fleet it is

That none whose words are not as fleet as birds upon the wing,
And regal as her mountains,

And radiant as her fountains
Of rainbow-coloured sea-spray that every wave can fling
Against the cliffs of England, the sturdy cliffs of England,
Could more than seem to dream of it,

Or catch one flying gleam of it, Above the seas of England that never cease to sing.

THE OLD SCEPTIC

I AM weary of disbelieving: why should I wound my love
To pleasure a sophist's pride in a graven image of truth?
I will go back to my home, with the clouds and the stars above,
And the heaven I used to know, and the God of my buried
youth.

I will go back to the home where of old in my boyish pride
I pierced my father's heart with a murmur of unbelief.

He only looked in my face as I spoke, but his mute eyes cried

Night after night in my dreams; and he died in grief, in grief.

Books? I have read the books, the books that we write ourselves,

Extolling our love of an abstract truth and our pride of debate:

I will go back to the love of the cotter who sings as he delves, To that childish infinite love and the God above fact and date.

To that ignorant infinite God who colours the meaningless flowers,

To that lawless infinite Poet who crowns the law with the crime;

To the Weaver who covers the world with a garment of wonderful hours,

And holds in His hand like threads the tales and the truths of time.

Is the faith of the cotter so simple and narrow as this? Ah, well,

It is hardly so narrow as yours who daub and plaster with dyes

The shining mirrors of heaven, the shadowy mirrors of hell, And blot out the dark deep vision, if it seem to be framed with lies.

No faith I hurl against you, no fact to freeze your sneers.

Only the doubt you taught me to weld in the fires of youth
Leaps to my hand like the flaming sword of nineteen hundred
years.

The sword of the high God's answer, O Pilate, what is truth?

Your laughter has killed more hearts than ever were pierced with swords,

Ever you daub new mirrors and turn the old to the wall; And more than blood is lost in the weary battle of words; For creeds are many; but God is One, and contains them all.

Ah, why should we strive or cry? Surely the end is close!
Hold by your little truths: deem your triumph complete!
But nothing is true or false in the infinite heart of the rose;
And the earth is a little dust that clings to our travelling feet.

I will go back to my home and look at the wayside flowers, And hear from the wayside cabins the kind old hymns again, Where Christ holds out His arms in the quiet evening hours, And the light of the chapel porches broods on the peaceful lane.

And there I shall hear men praying the deep old foolish prayers,
And there I shall see, once more, the fond old faith confessed,
And the strange old light on their faces who hear as a blind
man hears,—

Come unto Me, ye weary. and I will give you rest.

I will go back and believe in the deep old foolish tales,
And pray the simple prayers that I learned at my mother's
knee,

Where the Sabbath tolls its peace thro' the breathless mountain-vales,

And the sunset's evening hymn hallows the listening sea.

THE DEATH OF CHOPIN

Sing to me! Ah, remember how
Poor Heine here in Paris leant
Watching me play at the fall of day
And following where the music went,
Till that old cloud upon his brow
Was almost smoothed away.

"Do roses in the moonlight flame
Like this and this?" he said and smiled;
Then bent his head as o'er his dead
Brother might breathe some little child
The accustomed old half-jesting name,
With all its mockery fled,

Like summer lightnings, far away,
In heaven. O, what Bohemian nights
We passed down there for that brief year
When art revealed her last delights;
And then, that night, that night in May
When Hugo came to hear!

"Do roses in the moonlight glow
Like this and this?" I could not see
His eyes, and yet—they were quite wet,
Blinded, I think! What should I be
If in that hour I did not know
My own diviner debt?

For God has made this world of ours
Out of His own exceeding pain,
As here in art man's bleeding heart
Slow drop by drop completes the strain;
And dreams of death make sweet the flowers
Where lovers meet to part.

Recall, recall my little room

Where all the masters came that night,
Came just to hear me, Meyerbeer,
Lamartine, Balzac; and no light
But my two candles in the gloom;
Though she, she too was there,

George Sand. This music once unlocked My heart, she took the gold she prized: Her novel gleams no richer: dreams Like mine are best unanalysed: And she forgets her poor bemocked Prince Karol, now, it seems.

I was Prince Karol; yes, and Lisz*, Count Salvator Albani: she My Floriani—all so far Away!—My dreams are like the sea That round Majorca sighed and kissed Each softly mirrored star.

O, what a golden round of hours
Our island villa knew: we two
Alone with sky and sea, the sigh
Of waves, the warm unfathomed blue;
With what a chain of nights like flowers
We bound Love, she and I.

What music, what harmonious
Glad triumphs of the world's desire
Where passion yearns to God and burns
Earth's dross out with its own pure fire,
Or tolls like some deep angelus
Through Death's divine nocturnes.

"Do roses in the moonlight glow
Like this and this?" What did she think
Of him whose hands at Love's command
Made Life as honey o'er the brink
Of Death drip slow, darkling and slow?
Ah, did she understand?

She studied every sob she heard,
She watched each dying hope she found;
And yet she understood not one
Poor sorrow there that like a wound
Gaped, bleeding, pleading—for one word—
No? And the dream was done.

For her—I am "wrapped in incense gloom,
In drifting clouds and golden light;"
Once I was shod with fire and trod
Beethoven's path through storm and night:
It is too late now to resume
My monologue with God.

Well, my lost love, you were so kind
In those old days: ah, yes; you came
When I was ill! In dreams you still
Will come? (Do roses always flame
By moonlight, thus?) I, too, grow blind
With wondering if she will.

Yet, Floriani, what am I
To you, though love was life to me?
My life consumed like some perfumed
Pale altar-flame beside the sea:
You stood and smiled and watched it die!
You, you whom it illumed,

Could you not feed it with your love?

Am I not starving here and now?

Sing, sing! I'd miss no smile or kiss—

No roses in Majorca glow

Like this and this—so death may prove

Best—ah, how sweet life is!

SONG

(AFTER THE FRENCH OF ROSTAND)

O, MANY a lover sighs
Beneath the summer skies
For black or hazel eyes
All day.
No light of hope can mar
My whiter brighter star;
I love a Princess far
Away.

Now you that haste to meet
Your love's returning feet
Must plead for every sweet
Caress;
But, day and night and day,
Without a prayer to pray,
I love my far away
Princess.

BUTTERFLIES

Sun-child, as you watched the rain

Beat the pane,
Saw the garden of your dreams

Where the clove carnation grows

And the rose

Veiled with shimmering shades and gleams,

Mirrored colours, mystic gleams,
Fairy dreams,
Drifting in your radiant eyes
Half in earnest asked, that day,
Half in play,
Where were all the butterflies?

Where were all the butterflies
When the skies
Clouded and their bowers of clover
Bowed beneath the golden shower?
Every flower
Shook and the rose was brimming over.

Ah, the dog-rose trembling over
Thyme and clover,
How it glitters in the sun,
Now the hare-bells lift again
Bright with rain
After all the showers are done!

See, when all the showers are done,

How the sun
Softly smiling o'er the seene
Bids the white wings come and go

To and fro
Through the maze of gold and green.

Magic webs of gold and green
Rainbow sheen
Mesh the maze of flower and fern,
Cuekoo-grass and meadow-sweet,
And the wheat
Where the crimson poppies burn.

Ay; and where the poppies burn,
They return
All across the dreamy downs,
Little wings that flutter and beat
O'er the sweet
Bluffs the purple clover crowns.

Where the fairy clover crowns
Dreamy downs,
And amidst the golden grass
Buttercups and daisies blow
To and fro
When the shadowy billows pass;

Time has watched them pause and pass
Where Love was;
Ah, what fairy butterflies,
Little wild incarnate blisses,
Coloured kisses,
Floating under azure skies!

Under those eternal skies
See, they rise:
Mottled wings of moony sheen,
Wings in whitest star-shine dipped,
Orange tipped,
Eyed with black and veined with green.

They were fairies plumed with green
Rainbow-sheen
Ere Time bade their host begone
From that palace built of roses
Which still dozes
In the greenwood all alone.

In the greenwood all alone
And unknown:
Now they roam these mortal dells
Wondering where that happy glade is,
Painted Ladies,
Admirals, and Tortoise-shells.

O, Fritillaries, Admirals,
Tortoise-shells;
You, like fragments of the skies
Fringed with Autumn's richest hues,
Dainty blues
Patterned with mosaic dyes;

Oh, and you whose peacock dyes
Gleam with eyes;
You, whose wings of burnished copper
Burn upon the sunburnt brae
Where all day
Whirrs the hot and grey grasshopper;

While the grey grasshopper whirrs
In the furze,
You that with your sulphur wings
Melt into the gold perfume
Of the broom
Where the linnet sits and sings;

You that, as a poet sings,
On your wings
Image forth the dreams of earth,
Quickening them in form and hue
To the new
Glory of a brighter birth;

You that bring to a brighter birth
Dust and earth,
Rapt to glory on your wings,
All transfigured in the white
Living light
Shed from out the soul of things;

Heralds of the soul of things,
You whose wings
Carry heaven through every glade;
Thus transfigured from the petals
Death unsettles,
Little souls of leaf and blade;

You that mimic bud and blade,
Light and shade;
Tinted souls of leaf and stone,
Flower and sunny bank of sand,
Fairyland
Calls her children to their own;

Calls them back into their own
Great unknown;
Where the harmonies they cull
On their wings are made complete
As they beat
Through the Gate called Beautiful.

SONG OF THE WOODEN-LEGGED FIDDLER

(PORTSMOUTH 1805)

I LIVED in a cottage adown in the West
When I was a boy, a boy;
But I knew no peace and I took no rest
Though the roses nigh smothered my snug little nest;
For the smell of the sea
Was much rarer to me,
And the life of a sailor was all my joy.

Chorus.—The life of a sailor was all my joy!

My mother she wept, and she begged me to stay
Anchored for life to her apron-string,
And soon she would want me to help with the hay;
So I bided her time, then I flitted away
On a night of delight in the following spring,
With a pair of stout shoon
And a seafaring tune
And a bundle and stick in the light of the moon,
Down the long road
To Portsmouth I strode,
To fight like a sailor for country and king.

Chorus.—To fight like a sailor for country and king.

And now that my feet are turned homeward again My heart is still crying Ahoy! Ahoy! And my thoughts are still out on the Spanish main A-chasing the frigates of France and Spain, For at heart an old sailor is always a boy;

And his nose will still itch
For the powder and pitch
Till the days when he can't tell t'other from which,
Nor a grin o' the guns from a glint o' the sea,
Nor a skipper like Nelson from lubbers like me.

Chorus.—Nor a skipper like Nelson from lubbers like me.

Ay! Now that I'm old I'm as bold as the best,
And the life of a sailor is all my joy;
Though I've swapped my leg
For a wooden peg
And my head is as bald as a new-laid egg,
The smell of the sea
Is like victuals to me,
And I think in the grave I'll be crying Ahoy!

For, though my old careass is ready to rest, At heart an old sailor is always a boy.

Chorus.—At heart an old sailor is always a boy.

THE FISHER-GIRL

Where the old grey churchyard slopes to the sea,
On the sunny side of a mossed headstone;
Watching the wild white butterflies pass
Through the fairy forests of grass,
Two little children with brown legs bare
Were merrily, merrily
Weaving a wonderful daisy-chain,
And chanting the rhyme that was graven there
Over and over and over again;
While the warm wind came and played with their hair
And laughed and was gone
Out, far out to the foam-flowered lea
Like an ocean-wandering memory.

Eighteen hundred and forty-three, Dan Trevennick was lost at sea; And, buried here at her husband's side Lies the body of Joan, his bride, Who, a little while after she lost him, died. This was the rhyme that was graven there,
And the children chanted it quietly;
As the warm wind came and played with their hair,
And rustled the golden grasses against the stone,
And laughed and was gone

To waken the wild white flowers of the sea, And sing a song of the days that were, A song of memory, gay and blind As the sun on the graves that it left behind; For this, ah this, was the song of the wind.

T

She sat on the tarred old jetty, with a sailor's careless ease, And the clear waves danced around her feet and kissed her tawny knees;

Her head was bare, and her thick black hair was coiled behind a throat

Chiselled as hard and bright and bold as the bow of a sailing boat.

II

Her eyes were blue, and her jersey was blue as the lapping, slapping seas,

And the rose in her cheek was painted red by the brisk Atlantic breeze:

And she sat and waited her father's craft, while Dan Trevennick's eves

Were sheepishly watching her sunlit smiles and her soft contented sighs.

III

For he thought he would give up his good black pipe and his evening glasses of beer,

And blunder to chapel on Sundays again for a holy Christian year,

To hold that foot in his hard rough hand and kiss the least of its toes:

Then he swore at himself for a great damned fool; which he probably was, God knows.

IV

Often in summer twilights, too, he would sit on a coil of rope, As the stars came out in their twinkling crowds to play with wonder and hope.

While he watched the side of her clear-cut face as she sat on the

jetty and fished,

And even to help her coil her line was more than he hoped or wished.

V

But once or twice o'er the dark green tide he saw with a solemn delight,

Hooked and splashing after her line, a flash and a streak of white:

As hand over hand she hauled it up, a great black conger eel, For Dan Trevennick to kill as it squirmed with its head beneath his heel.

VI

And at last, with a crash and a sunset cry from the low soft evening star,

A shadowy schooner suddenly loomed o'er the dark green oily

With fairy-like spars and misty masts in the golden dusk of gloaming,

Where the last white seamew's wide-spread wings were wistfully westward roaming;

VII

Then the song of the foreign seamen rose in the magical evening air,

Faint and far away, as it seemed, but they knew it was, ah, so near;

Far away as her heart from Dan's as he sheepishly drew to her side,

And near as her heart when he kissed the lips of his newly promised bride.

VIII

And when they were riding away in the train on the night of their honeymoon,

What a whisper tingled against her cheek as it blushed like a rose in June:

For she said, "I am tired and ready for bed," and Dan said, "So am I:"

And she murmured, "Are you tired, too, poor Dan?" and he answered her, "No, dear, why?"

IX

It was never a problem-play, at least, and the end of it all is this;

They were drowned in the bliss of their ignorance and buried the rest in a kiss;

And they loved one another their whole life long, as lovers will often do;

For it never was only the fairy-tales that rang so royally true.

\mathbf{X}

The rose in her cheek was painted red by the brisk Atlantic breeze;

Her eyes were blue, and her jersey was blue as the lapping, slapping seas;

Her head was bare, and her thick black hair was coiled behind a throat

Chiselled as hard and bright and bold as the bow of a sailing boat.

XI

Eighteen hundred and forty-three, Dan Trevennick was lost at sea; And, buried here at her husband's side Lies the body of Joan, his bride, Who, a little while after she lost him, died.

A SONG OF TWO BURDENS

The round brown sails were reefed and struggling home Over the glitter and gloom of the angry deep: Dark in the cottage she sang, "Soon, soon, he will come, Dreamikin, Drowsy-head, sleep, my little one, sleep."

Over the glitter and gloom of the angry deep Was it only a dream or a shadow that vanished away? "Lullaby, little one, sleep, my little one, sleep." She sang in a dream as the shadows covered the day.

Was it only a sail or a shadow that vanished away?

The boats come home: there is one that will never return;
But she sang in a dream as the shadows buried the day;
And she set the supper and begged the fire to burn.

The boats come home; but one will never return; And a strangled cry went up from the struggling sea. She sank on her knees and begged the fire to burn, "Burn, oh burn, for my love is coming to me!"

A strangled cry went up from the struggling sea,
A cry where the ghastly surf to the moon-dawn rolled;
"Burn, oh burn; for my love is coming to me,
His hands will be scarred with the ropes and starved with
the cold."

A strangled cry where the foam in the moonlight rolled, A bitter cry from the heart of the ghastly sea; "His hands will be frozen, the night is dark and cold, Burn, oh burn, for my love is coming to me."

One cry to God from the soul of the shuddering sea, One moment of stifling lips and struggling hands; "Burn, oh burn; for my love is coming to me; And oh, I think the little one understands."

One moment of stifling lips and struggling hands,
Then only the glitter and gloom of the angry deep;
"And oh, I think the little one understands;
Dreamikin, Drowsy-head, sleep, my little one, sleep."

EARTH-BOUND

GHOSTS? Love would fain believe,
Earth being so fair, the dead might wish to return?
Is it so strange if, even in heaven, they yearn
For the May-time and the dreams it used to give?

Through dark abysms of Space,

From strange new spheres where Death has called them
now

May they not, with a crown on every brow, Still cry to the loved earth's lost familiar face?

We two, love, we should come Seeking a little refuge from the light Of the blinding terrible star-sown Infinite, Seeking some sheltering roof, some four-walled home,

From that too high, too wide

Communion with the universe and God,

How glad to creep back to some lane we trod

Hemmed in with a hawthorn hedge on either side.

Fresh from death's boundless birth,

How fond the circled vision of the sea

Would seem to souls tired of Infinity,

How kind the soft blue boundaries of earth,

How rich the nodding spray
Of pale green leaves that made the sapphire deep
A background to the dreams of that brief sleep
We called our life when heaven was far away.

How strange would be the sight
Of the little towns and twisted streets again,
Where all the hurrying works and ways of men
Would seem a children's game for our delight.

What boundless heaven could give
This joy in the strait austere restraints of earth,
Whereof the dead have felt the immortal dearth
Who look upon God's face and cannot live?

Our ghosts would clutch at flowers
As drowning men at straws, for fear the sea
Should sweep them back to God's Eternity,
Still clinging to the day that once was ours.

No more with fevered brain

Plunging across the gulfs of Space and Time
Would we revisit this our earthly clime
We two, if we could ever come again;

Not as we came of old,

But reverencing the flesh we now despise
And gazing out with consecrated eyes,
Each of us glad of the other's hand to hold.

So we should wander nigh
Our mortal home, and see its little roof
Keeping the deep eternal night aloof
And yielding us a refuge from the sky.

We should steal in, once more,
Under the cloudy lilac at the gate,
Up the walled garden, then with hearts elate
Forget the stars and close our cottage door.

Oh then, as children use

To make themselves a little hiding-place,
We would rejoice in narrowness of space,
And God should give us nothing more to lose.

How good it all would seem

To souls that from the æonian ebb and flow
Came down to hear once more the to and fro
Swing o' the clock dictate its hourly theme.

How dear the strange recall

From vast antiphonies of joy and pain
Beyond the grave, to these old books again,
That cosy lamp, those pictures on the wall.

Home! Home! The old desire!
We would shut out the innumerable skies,
Draw close the curtains, then with patient eyes
Bend o'er the hearth; laugh at our memories,
Or watch them crumbling in the crimson fire.

ART, THE HERALD

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness"

Τ

BEYOND; beyond; and yet again beyond!
What went ye out to seek, oh foolish-fond?
Is not the heart of all things here and now?
Is not the circle infinite, and the centre
Everywhere, if ye would but hear and enter?
Come; the porch bends and the great pillars bow.

H

Come; come and see the secret of the sun; The sorrow that holds the warring worlds in one; The pain that holds Eternity in an hour; One God in every seed self-sacrificed, One star-eyed, star-crowned universal Christ, Re-crucified in every wayside flower.

THE OPTIMIST

TEACH me to live and to forgive
The death that all must die
Who pass in slumber through this heaven
Of earth and sea and sky;

Who live by grace of Time and Space At which their peace is priced; And east their lots upon the robe That wraps the cosmic Christ;

Who cannot see the world-wide Tree Where Love lies bleeding still; This universal cross of God Our star-crowned Igdrasil.

Teach me to live; I do not ask
For length of earthly days,
Or that my heaven-appointed task
Should fall in pleasant ways;

If in this hour of warmth and light
The last great knell were knolled;
If Death should close mine eyes to-night
And all the tale be told;

While I have lips to speak or sing And power to draw this breath, Shall I not praise my Lord and King Above all else, for death?

When on a golden eve he drove
His keenest sorrow deep
Deep in my heart, and called it love;
I did not wince or weep.

A wild Hosanna shook the world And wakened all the sky, As through a white and burning light Her passionate face went by.

When on a golden dawn he called My best beloved away, I did not shrink or stand appalled Before the hopeless day. The joy of that triumphant dearth And anguish cannot die; The joy that casts aside this earth For immortality.

I would not change one word of doom
Upon the dreadful scroll,
That gave her body to the tomb
And freed her fettered soul.

For now each idle breeze can bring
The kiss I never seek;
The nightingale has heard her sing,
The rose caressed her cheek.

And every pang of every grief
That ruled my soul an hour,
Has given new splendours to the leaf,
New glories to the flower;

And melting earth into the heaven
Whose inmost heart is pain,
Has drawn the veils apart and given
Her soul to mine again.

A POST-IMPRESSION

T

HE sat with his foolish mouth agape at the golden glare of the sea,

And his wizened and wintry flaxen locks fluttered around his

And his foolish infinite eyes were full of the sky's own glitter and glee,

As he dandled an old Dutch Doll on his knee and sang the song of the spheres.

TT

Blue and red and yellow and green they are melting away in the white;

Hey! but the wise old world was wrong and my idiot heart was right;

Yes; and the merry-go-round of the stars rolls to my cracked old tune,

Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon.

III

Then he cradled his doll on his crooning heart and cried as a sea-bird cries;

And the hot sun reeled like a drunken god through the violent violet vault:

And the hillside cottage that danced to the deep debauch of the perfumed skies

Grew palsied and white in the purple heath as a pillar of Dead Sea salt.

IV

There were three gaunt sun-flowers nigh his chair: they were yellow as death and tall;

And they threw their sharp blue shadowy stars on the blind white wizard wall;

And they nodded their heads to the weird old hymn that daunted the light of the noon,

Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon.

V

The little dog laughed and leered with the white of his eye as he sidled away

To stare at the dwarfish hunchback waves that crawled to the foot of the hill,

For his master's infinite mind was wide to the wealth of the night and the day;

The walls were down: it was one with the Deep that only a God can fill.

VI

- Then a tiny maiden of ten sweet summers arrived with a song and a smile,
- And she swung on the elfin garden-gate and sung to the sea for a while,
- And a phantom face went weeping by and a ghost began to eroon
- Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon.

VII

- And she followed a butterfly up to his chair; and the moon-calf caught at her hand
 - And stared at her wide blue startled eyes and muttered, "My dear, I have been,
- In fact, I am there at this moment, I think, in a wonderful fairy-land:"
 - And he bent and he whispered it low in her ear—"I know why the grass is green.

VIII

- "I know why the daisy is white, my dear, I know why the seas are blue:
- I know that the world is a dream, my dear, and I know that the dream is true;
- I know why the rose and the toad-stool grow, as a curse and a crimson boon,
- Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon.

IX

- "If I gaze at a rose, do you know, it grows till it overshadows the earth.
 - Like a wonderful Tree of Knowledge, my dear, the Tree of our evil and good:
- But I dare not tell you the terrible vision that gave the toadstool birth.
 - The dream of a heart that breaks, my dear, and a Tree that is bitter with blood.

X

"Oh, Love may wander wide as the wind that blows from sea to sea,

But a wooden dream, for me, my dear, and a painted memory: For the God that has bidden the toad-stool grow has writ in his cosmic rune.

Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon."

IX

Then he stared at the child and he laughed aloud, and she suddenly screamed and fled,

As he dreamed of enticing her out thro' the ferns to a quarry that gapped the hill.

To hurtle her down and grin as her gold hair scattered around her head

Far, far below, like a sunflower disk, so crimson-spattered and still.

XII

"Ah, hush!" he cried; and his dark old eyes were wet with a sacred love

As he kissed the wooden face of his doll and winked at the skies above,

"I know, I know why the toad-stools grow, and the rest of the world will, soon;

Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon."

IIIX

Blue and red and yellow and green they are all mixed up in the white;

Hey! but the wise old world was wrong and my idiot heart was right;

Yes; and the merry-go-round of the stars rolls to my cracked old tune.

Hey! diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon."

THE BARREL-ORGAN

THERE'S a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks low;

And the music's not immortal; but the world has made it

And fulfilled it with the sunset glow;

And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light;

And they've given it a glory and a part to play again In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And now it's marching onward through the realms of old romance,

And trolling out a fond familiar tune,

And now it's roaring cannon down to fight the King of France, And now it's prattling softly to the moon,

And all around the organ there's a sea without a shore Of human joys and wonders and regrets;

To remember and to recompense the music evermore For what the cold machinery forgets. . . .

Yes; as the music changes,
Like a prismatic glass,
It takes the light and ranges
Through all the moods that pass;
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets,
And gives the world a glimpse of all
The colours it forgets.

And there La Traviata sighs
Another sadder song;
And there Il Trovatore cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
And bolder knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance,
Than ever here on earth below
Have whirled into—a dance!—

Go down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time; Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!) And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's

wonderland;

Go down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!'

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom and soft perfume and sweet perfume,

The cherry-trees are seas of bloom (and oh, so near to London!)

And there they say, when dawn is high and all the world's a blaze of sky

The cuckoo, though he's very shy, will sing a song for London.

The Dorian nightingale is rare and yet they say you'll hear him there

At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!) The linnet and the throstle, too, and after dark the long halloo And golden-eyed *tu-whit*, *tu-whoo* of owls that ogle London.

For Noah hardly knew a bird of any kind that isn't heard At Kew, at Kew in lilac-time (and oh, so near to London!) And when the rose begins to pout and all the chestnut spires are out

You'll hear the rest without a doubt, all chorussing for London:—

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time; Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!) And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland:

Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

And then the troubadour begins to thrill the golden street, In the City as the sun sinks low;

And in all the gaudy busses there are scores of weary feet Marking time, sweet time, with a dull mechanic beat,

And a thousand hearts are plunging to a love they'll never meet,

Through the meadows of the sunset, through the poppies and the wheat,

In the land where the dead dreams go.

Verdi, Verdi, when you wrote *Il Trovatore* did you dream. Of the City when the sun sinks low.

Of the organ and the monkey and the many-coloured stream On the Piccadilly pavement, of the myriad eyes that seem To be litten for a moment with a wild Italian gleam

As A che la morte parodies the world's eternal theme And pulses with the sunset-glow.

There's a thief, perhaps, that listens with a face of frozen stone

In the City as the sun sinks low;

There's a portly man of business with a balance of his own, There's a clerk and there's a butcher of a soft reposeful tone.

And they're all of them returning to the heavens they have known:

They are crammed and jammed in busses and—they're each of them alone

In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a very modish woman and her smile is very bland In the City as the sun sinks low:

And her hansom jingles onward, but her little jewelled hand Is clenehed a little tighter and she cannot understand What she wants or why she wanders to that undiscovered land,

For the parties there are not at all the sort of thing she planned, In the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a rowing man that listens and his heart is crying out

In the City as the sun sinks low;

For the barge, the eight, the Isis, and the coach's whoop and shout,

For the minute-gun, the counting and the long dishevelled rout,

For the howl along the tow-path and a fate that's still in doubt.

For a roughened oar to handle and a race to think about In the land where the dead dreams go. There's a labourer that listens to the voices of the dead In the City as the sun sinks low;

And his hand begins to tremble and his face to smoulder red As he sees a loafer watching him and—there he turns his head · And stares into the sunset where his April love is fled, For he hears her softly singing and his lonely soul is led

Through the land where the dead dreams go.

There's an old and haggard demi-rep, it's ringing in her ears, In the City as the sun sinks low;

With the wild and empty sorrow of the love that blights and sears,

Oh, and if she hurries onward, then be sure, be sure she hears, Hears and bears the bitter burden of the unforgotten years, And her laugh's a little harsher and her eyes are brimmed with tears

For the land where the dead dreams go.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street In the City as the sun sinks low;

Though the music's only Verdi there's a world to make it sweet

Just as yonder yellow sunset where the earth and heaven meet

Mellows all the sooty City! Hark, a hundred thousand feet Are marching on to glory through the poppies and the wheat In the land where the dead dreams go.

> So it's Jeremiah, Jeremiah, What have you to say When you meet the garland girls Tripping on their way?

All around my gala hat
I wear a wreath of roses
(A long and lonely year it is
I've waited for the May!)
If any one should ask you,
The reason why I wear it is—
My own love, my true love
Is coming home to-day.

And it's buy a bunch of violets for the lady (It's lilac-time in London; it's lilac-time in London!)
Buy a bunch of violets for the lady
While the sky burns blue above:

On the other side the street you'll find it shady (It's lilac-time in London; it's lilac-time in London!)
But buy a bunch of violets for the lady,
And tell her she's your own true love.

There's a barrel-organ carolling across a golden street
In the City as the sun sinks glittering and slow;
And the music's not immortal; but the world has made it
sweet

And enriched it with the harmonies that make a song complete In the deeper heavens of music where the night and morning meet.

As it dies into the sunset-glow;

And it pulses through the pleasures of the City and the pain That surround the singing organ like a large eternal light, And they've given it a glory and a part to play again In the Symphony that rules the day and night.

And there, as the music changes,
The song runs round again.
Once more it turns and ranges
Through all its joy and pain,
Dissects the common carnival
Of passions and regrets;
And the wheeling world remembers all
The wheeling song forgets.

Once more La Traviata sighs
Another sadder song:
Once more Il Trovatore cries
A tale of deeper wrong;
Once more the knights to battle go
With sword and shield and lance
Till once, once more, the shattered foe
Has whirled into—a dance!

Come down to Kew in lilac-time, in lilac-time, in lilac-time; Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!) And you shall wander hand in hand with love in summer's wonderland;

Come down to Kew in lilac-time (it isn't far from London!)

THE LITANY OF WAR

Sandalphon, whose white wings to heaven upbear The weight of human prayer,

Stood silent in the still eternal Light
Of God, one dreadful night.

His wings were clogged with blood and foul with mire, His body seared with fire.

"Hast thou no word for Me?" the Master said.

The angel sank his head:

"Word from the nations of the East and West," He moaned, "that blood is best.

The patriot prayers of either half of earth,
Hear Thou, and judge their worth.

Out of the obscene seas of slaughter, hear, First, the first nation's prayer:

'O God, deliver Thy people. Let Thy sword Destroy our enemies, Lord!'

Pure as the first, as passionate in trust
That their own cause is just;

Puppets as fond in those dark hands of greed;
As fervent in their creed:

As blindly moved, as utterly betrayed,
As urgent for Thine aid;

Out of the obscene seas of slaughter, hear
The second nation's prayer:

'O God, deliver Thy people. Let Thy sword Destroy our enemies, Lord.'

Over their slaughtered children, one great cry From either enemy!

From either host, thigh-deep in filth and shame, One prayer, one and the same; Out of the obscene seas of slaughter, hear,
From East and West, one prayer:
'O God, deliver Thy people. Let Thy sword
Destroy our enemies, Lord.'"

Then, on the Cross of His creative pain,
God bowed His head again.

Then, East and West, over all seas and lands,
Out-stretched His piercèd hands.

"And yet," Sandalphon whispered, "men deny
The Eternal Calvary."

THE ORIGIN OF LIFE

[Written in answer to certain scientific pronouncements]

T

In the beginning?—Slowly grope we back
Along the narrowing track,
Back to the deserts of the world's pale prime,
The mire, the clay, the slime;
And then . . . what then? Surely to something less;
Back, back, to Nothingness!

TT

You dare not halt upon that dwindling way!

There is no gulf to stay
Your footsteps to the last. Go back you must!

Far, far below the dust,
Descend, descend! Grade by dissolving grade,

We follow, unafraid!
Dissolve, dissolve this moving world of men

Into thin air—and then?

III

O pioneers, O warriors of the Light,
In that abysmal night,
Will you have courage, then, to rise and tell
Earth of this miracle?
Will you have courage, then, to bow the head,
And say, when all is said—

"Out of this Nothingness arose our thought! This blank abysmal Nought Woke, and brought forth that lighted City street.

Those towers, that armoured fleet?"...

IV

When you have seen those vacant primal skies Beyond the centuries.

Watched the pale mists across their darkness flow, As in a lantern-show,

Weaving, by merest "chance," out of thin air, Pageants of praise and prayer;

Watched the great hills like clouds arise and set. And one—named Olivet:

When you have seen, as a shadow passing away. One child clasp hands and pray:

When you have seen emerge from that dark mire One martyr, ringed with fire;

Or, from that Nothingness, by special grace. One woman's love-lit face,

V

Will you have courage, then, to front that law (From which your sophists draw

Their only right to flout one human creed) That nothing can proceed-

Not even thought, not even love-from less Than its own nothingness?

The law is yours! But dare you waive your pride, And kneel where you denied?

The law is yours! Dare you re-kindle, then, One faith for faithless men,

And say you found, on that dark road you trod, In the beginning—GOD?

THE LAST BATTLE

Kings of the earth, Kings of the earth, the trumpet rings for warning,

And like the golden swords that ray from out the setting

The shout goes out of the trumpet mouth across the hills of morning,

Wake; for the last great battle dawns and all the wars are done.

Now all the plains of Europe smoke with marching hooves of thunder,

And through each ragged mountain-gorge the guns begin to gleam;

And round a hundred cities where the women watch and wonder,

The tramp of passing armies aches and faints into a dream.

The King of Ind is drawing nigh: a hundred leagues are clouded

Along his loud earth-shaking march from east to western sea:

The King o' the Setting Sun is here and all the seas are shrouded

With sails that carry half the world to front Eternity.

Soon shall the darkness roll around the grappling of the nations, A darkness lit with deadly gleams of blood and steel and fire; Soon shall the last great pæan of earth's war-worn generations Roar through the thunder-clouded air round War's red funeral pyre.

But here defeat and victory are both allied with heaven,
The enfolding sky makes every foe the centre of her dome,
Each fights for God and his own right, and unto each is given
The right to find the heart of heaven where'er he finds
his home.

O, who shall win, and who shall lose, and who shall take the

Here at the meeting of the roads, where every cause is right? O, who shall live, and who shall die, and who shall tell the story?

Each strikes for faith and fatherland in that immortal fight.

High on the grey old hills of Time the last immortal rally, Under the storm of the last great tattered flag, shall laugh to see

The blood of Armageddon roll from every smoking valley, Shall laugh aloud, then rush on death for God and chivalry.

Kings of the earth, Kings of the earth, O, which of you then shall inherit

The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory? for the world's old light grows dim

And the cry of you all goes up all night to the dark enfolding Spirit,

Each of you fights for God and home; but God, ah, what of Him?

THE PARADOX

"I Am that I Am"

Ι

All that is broken shall be mended;
All that is lost shall be found;
I will bind up every wound
When that which is begun shall be ended.
Not peace I brought among you but a sword
To divide the night from the day,
When I sent My worlds forth in their battle-array
To die and to live,
To give and to receive,
Saith the Lord.

TT

Of old time they said none is good save our God;

But ye that have seen how the ages have shrunk from my rod, And how red is the wine-press wherein at my bidding they trod.

Have answered and said that with Eden I fashioned the snake, That I mould you of clay for a moment, then mar you and break.

And there is none evil but I, the supreme Evil, God.

Lo, I say unto both, I am neither;

But greater than either:

For meeting and mingling in Me they become neither evil nor good:

Their cycle is rounded, they know neither hunger nor food, They need neither sickle nor seed-time, nor root nor fruit,

They are ultimate, infinite, absolute.

Therefore I say unto all that have sinned,

East and West and South and North The wings of my measureless love go forth

To cover you all: they are tree as the wings of the wind.

III

Consider the troubled waters of the sea

Which never rest;

As the wandering waves are ye;

Yet assuaged and appeared and forgiven.

As the seas are gathered together under the infinite glory of heaven,

I gather you all to my breast.

But the sins and the creeds and the sorrows that trouble the

Relapse and subside,

Chiming like chords in a world-wide symphony

As they cease to chide;

For they break and they are broken of sound and hue, And they meet and they murmur and they mingle anew,

Interweaving, intervolving, like waves: they have no stay:

They are all made as one with the deep, when they sink and are vanished away;

Yea, all is toned at a turn of the tide To a calm and golden harmony: But I-shall I wonder or greatly care. For their depth or their height? Shall it be more than a song in my sight How many wandering waves there were, Or how many colours and changes of light?

It is your eyes that see

And take heed of these things: they were fashioned for you, not for Me.

IV

With the stars and the clouds I have clothed Myself here for your eyes

To behold That which Is. I have set forth the strength of the skies

As one draweth a picture before you to make your hearts wise; That the infinite souls I have fashioned may know as I know, Visibly revealed

In the flowers of the field,

Yea, declared by the stars in their courses, the tides in their flow,

And the clash of the world's wide battle as it sways to and fro, Flashing forth as a flame

The unnameable Name, The ineffable Word, I am the Lord.

\mathbf{v}

I am the End to which the whole world strives: Therefore are ye girdled with a wild desire and shod With sorrow; for among you all no soul Shall ever cease or sleep or reach its goal Of union and communion with the Whole, Or rest content with less than being God. Still, as unending asymptotes, your lives In all their myriad wandering ways

Approach Me with the progress of the golden days:

Approach Me; for my love contrives
That ye should have the glory of this
For ever; yea, that life should blend
With life and only vanish away.

With life and only vanish away From day to wider wealthier day,

Like still increasing spheres of light that melt and merge in wider spheres

Even as the infinite years of the past melt in the infinite future years.

Each new delight of sense, Each hope, each love, each fear,

Widens, relumes and recreates each sphere,

From a new ring and nimbus of pre-eminence.

I am the Sphere without circumference:

I only and for ever comprehend

All others that within me meet and blend.

Death is but the blinding kiss Of two finite infinities; Two finite infinite orbs

The splendour of the greater of which absorbs The less, though both like Love have no beginning and no end.

VI

Therefore is Love's own breath
Like Knowledge, a continual death;
And all his laughter and kisses and tears,
And woven wiles of peace and strife,
That ever widen thus your temporal spheres,
Are making of the memory of your former years
A very death in life.

VII

I am that I am; Ye are evil and good;

With colour and glory and story and song ye are fed as with food:

The cold and the heat,
The bitter and the sweet,
The calm and the tempest fulfil my Word;
Yet will ye complain of my two-edged sword

That has fashioned the finite and mortal and given you the sweetness of strife,

The blackness and whiteness, The darkness and brightness.

Which sever your souls from the formless and void and hold you fast-fettered to life?

VIII

Behold now, is Life not good? Yea, is it not also much more than the food.

More than the raiment, more than the breath?

Yet Strife is its name!

Say, which will ye cast out first from the furnace, the fuel or the flame?

Would ye all be as I am; and know neither evil nor good; neither life; neither death;

Or mix with the void and the formless till all were as one and the same?

IX

I am that I am; the Container of all things: kneel, lift up your hands

To the high Consummation of good and of evil which none understands;

The divine Paradox, the ineffable Word, in whose light the poor souls that ye trod
Underfoot as too vile for their fellows are at terrible union with

God!

Am I not over both evil and good,

The righteous man and the shedder of blood?

Shall I save or slay?

I am neither the night nor the day,

Saith the Lord.

Judge not, oh ye that are round my footstool, judge not, ere the hour be born

That shall laugh you also to scorn.

X

Ah, yet I say unto all that have sinned,
East and West and South and North
The wings of my measureless love go forth
To cover you all: they are free as the wings of the wind.

XI

But one thing is needful; and ye shall be true
To yourselves and the goal and the God that ye seek;
Yea, the day and the night shall requite it to you
If ye love one another, if your love be not weak.

XII

Since I sent out my worlds in their battle-array

To die and to live,

To give and to receive,

Not peace, not peace, I have brought among you but a sword,

To divide the night from the day,

Saith the Lord;

Yet all that is broken shall be mended,
And all that is lost shall be found,
I will bind up every wound,
When that which is begun shall be ended.

THE PROGRESS OF LOVE

(A LYRICAL SYMPHONY)

Ι

In other worlds I loved you, long ago:

Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

The woodbine whispers, low and sweet and low,
In other worlds I loved you, long ago;
The firwoods murmur and the sea-waves know
The message that the setting sun shall send.

In other worlds I loved you, long ago:
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

Π

And God sighed in the sunset; and the sea Chanted the soft recessional of Time Against the golden shores of mystery;

And ever as that long low change and chime With one slow sob of molten music yearned Westward, it seemed as if the Love sublime

Almost uttered itself, where the waves burned In little flower-soft flames of rose and green That woke to seaward, while the tides returned

Rising and falling, ruffled and serene,
With all the mirrored tints of heaven above
Shimmering through their mystic myriad sheen.

As a dove's burnished breast throbbing with love Swells and subsides to call her soft-eyed mate Home through the rosy gloom of glen or grove,

So when the greenwood noon was growing late
The sea called softly through the waste of years,
Called to the star that still can consecrate

The holy golden haze of human tears
Which tinges every sunset with our grief
Until the perfect Paraclete appears.

Ah, the long sigh that yields the world relief Rose and relapsed across Eternity, Making a joy of sorrows that are brief,

As, o'er the bright enchantment of the sea, Facing the towers of that old City of Pain Which stands upon the shores of mystery

And frowns across the immeasurable main, Venus among her cloudy sunset flowers Woke; and earth melted into heaven again. For even the City's immemorial towers Were tinted into secret tone and time, Like old forgotten tombs that age embowers

With muffling roses and with mossy rime Until they seem no monument of ours, But one more note in earth's accordant chime.

O Love, Love, Love, all dreams, desires and powers, Were but as chords of that ineffable psalm; And all the long blue lapse of summer hours,

And all the breathing sunset's golden balm By that æonian sorrow were resolved As dew into the music's infinite calm,

Through which the suns and moons and stars revolved According to the song's divine decree, Till Time was but a tide of intervolved

And interweaving worlds of melody;

In other worlds I loved you, long ago,—
The angelic citoles fainted o'er the sea;

And seraph citerns answered, sweet and low,
From where the sunset and the moonrise blend,
In other worlds I loved you, long ago;

Love that hath no beginning hath no end;
O Love, Love, Love, the bitter City of Pain
Bidding the golden echoes westward wend,

Chimed in accordant undertone again:

Though every grey old tower rose like a tomb
To mock the glory of the shoreless main

They could but strike such discords as illume

The music with strange gleams of utter light
And hallow all the valley's rosy gloom.

And there, though greyly sinking out of sight Before the wonders of the sky and sea, Back through the valley, back into the night,

While mystery melted into mystery,
The City still rebuffed the far sweet West
That dimmed her sorrows with infinity;

Yet sometimes yearning o'er the sea's bright breast To that remote Avilion would she gaze Where all lost loves and weary warriors rest.

Then she remembered, through that golden haze, (Oh faint as flowers the rose-white waves resound) Her Arthur whom she loved in the dead days,

And how he sailed to heal him of his wound, And how he lives and reigns eternally Where now that unknown love is throned and crowned

Who laid his bleeding head against her knee
And loosed the bitter breast-plate and unbound
His casque and brought him strangely o'er the sea,

And how she reigns beside him on that shore For ever (Yrma, queen, bend down to me) And they twain have no sorrow any more.

III

They have forgotten all that vanished away
When life's dark night died into death's bright day
They have forgotten all except the gleam
Of light when once he kissed her in a dream
Once on the lips and once upon the brow
In the white orb of God's transcendent Now;
And even then he knew that, long before,
Their eyes had met upon some distant shore;
Yea; that most lonely and immortal face
Which dwells beyond the dreams of time and space
Bowed down to him from out the happy place

And whispered to him, low and sweet and low In other worlds I loved you, long ago;
And then he knew his love could never die Because his queen was throned beyond the sky And called him to his own immortal sphere Forgetting Launcelot and Guinevere.

So Yrma reigns with Arthur, and they know
They loved on earth a million years ago;
And watched the sea-waves wistfully westward wend;
And heard a voice whispering in their flow,
And calling through the silent sunset-glow,
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

IV

It was about the dawn of day
I heard Etain and Anwyl say
The waving ferns are a fairy forest,
It is time, it is time to wander away;

For the dew is bright on the heather bells, And the breeze in the clover sways and swells, As the waves on the blue sea wake and wander, Over and under the braes and dells.

She was eight years old that day, Full of laughter and play; Eight years old and Anwyl nine,— Two young lovers were they.

Two young lovers were they,
Born in the City of Pain;
There was never a song in the world so gay
As the song of the child, Etain;

There was never a laugh so sweet
With the ripple of fairy bells,
And never a fairy foot so fleet
Dancing down the woodland dells!

She was eight years old that day, Two young lovers were they.

There was never a sea of mystical gleams
Glooming under enchanted skies
Deep as the dark miraculous dreams
In Anwyl's haunted eyes.

There was never a glory of light
Around the carolling lark
As Etain's eyes were brave and bright
To daunt the coming dark.

Two young lovers were they
Born in the City of Pain;
There was never a song in the world so gay
As the song of the child, Etain;

Blithe as the wind in the trees,
Blithe as the bird on the bough,
Blithe as the bees in the sweet Heart's-case
Where Love lies bleeding now.

V

And God sighed in the sunset; and the sea Forgot her sorrow, and all the breathless West Grew quiet as the blue tranquillity

That clad the broken mountain's brilliant breast, Over the City, with deep heather-bloom Heaving from erag to erag in sweet unrest,

A sea of dim rich colour and warm perfume Whose billows rocked the drowsy honey-bee Among the golden isles of gorse and broom

Like some enchanted ancient argosy
Drunkenly blundering over seas of dream
Past unimagined isles of mystery,

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Over whose yellow sands the soft waves cream, And sunbeams float and toss across the bare Rose-white arms and perilous breasts that gleam

Where sirens wind their glossy golden hair; Oh, miles on miles, the honeyed heather-bloom Heaving its purple through the high bright air

Rolled a silent glory of gleam and gloom
From mossy crag to crag and crest to crest
Untroubled by the valley's depth of doom.

The hawk dropped down into the pine-forest And, far below, the lavrock ruffled her wings Blossomwise over her winsome secret nest.

Then suddenly, softly, as when a fairy sings
Out of the heart of a rose in the heart of the fern,
Or in the floating starlight faintly rings

The frail blue hare-bells—turn again, and turn, Under and over, the silvery crescents cry To where the crimson fox-glove belfries burn

And with a deeper softer peal reply,

There came a ripple of music through the roses
That rustled on the dimmest rim of sky

Where many a frame of fretted leaves encloses
For lovers wandering in the fern-wet wood
An arch of summer sea that softly dozes

As if all mysteries were understood:
Yrma, my queen, what love could understand
That faint sweet music, God saith all is good,

As those two children, hand in sunburnt hand, Over the blithe blue hills and far away Wandered into their own green fairyland? VI

For the song is lost that shook the dew Where the wild musk-roses glisten, When the sunset dreamed that a dream was true And the birds were hushed to listen.

The song is lost that shook the night
With wings of richer fire,
Where the years had touched their eyes with light
And their souls with a new desire;

And the new delight of the strange old story Burned in the flower-soft skies, And nine more years with a darker glory Had deepened the light of her eyes;

But lost, oh more than lost the song
That shook the rose to tears,
As hand in hand they danced along
Through childhood's everlasting years.

"Oh, Love has wings," the linnet sings;
But the dead return no more, no more;
And the sea is breaking its old grey heart
Against the golden shore.

She was eight years old that day, Two young lovers were they.

If every song as they danced along
Paused on the springing spray;
Is there never a bird in the wide greenwood
Will hush its heart to-day?

There's never a leaf with dew impearled To make their pathway sweet, And never a blossom in all the world That knows the kiss of their feet. No light to-night declares the word That thrilled the blossomed bough, And stilled the happy singing bird That none can silence now.

The weary nightingale may sob
With her bleeding breast against a thorn,
And the wild white rose with every throb
Grow red as the laugh of morn;

With wings outspread she sinks her head But Love returns no more, no more; And the sea is breaking its old grey heart Against the golden shore.

Born in the City of Pain;
Ah, who knows, who knows
When Death shall turn to delight again
Or a wound to a red, red rose?

Eight years old that day,
Full of laughter and play;
Eight years old and Anwyl nine,—
Two young lovers were they.

VII

And down the scented heather-drowsy hills

The bare-foot children wandered, hand in hand,
And paddled through the laughing silver rills

In quest of fairyland;

And in each little sunburnt hand a spray,
A purple fox-glove bell-branch lightly swung,
And Anwyl told Etain how, far away,
One day he wandered through the dreamland dells

And watched the moonlit fairies as they sung And tolled the fox-glove bells:

And oh, how sweetly, sweetly to and fro
The fragrance of the music reeled and rung
Under the loaded boughs of starry May.

And God sighed in the sunset, and the sea Grew quieter than the hills: the mystery Of ocean, earth and sky was like a word Uttered, but all unheard, Uttered by every wave and cloud and leaf With all the immortal glory of mortal grief; And every wave that broke its heart of gold In music on the rainbow-dazzled shore Seemed telling, strangely telling, evermore A story that must still remain untold.

Oh, Once upon a time, and o'er and o'er
As aye the Happy ever after came
The enchanted waves lavished their facry lore

And tossed a foam-bow and a rosy flame
Around the whispers of the creaming foam,
Till the old rapture with the new sweet name

Through all the old romance began to roam,
And Anwyl, gazing out across the sea,
Dreamed that he heard the distance whisper "Come."

"Etain," he murmured softly and wistfully, With the soul's wakening wonder in his eyes, "Is it not strange to think that there can be

"No end for ever and ever to those skies, No shore beyond, or if there be a shore Still without end the world beyond it lies;

"Think; think, Etain;" and all his faery lore Mixed with the faith that brought all gods to birth And sees new heavens transcend for evermore

The poor impossibilities of earth;
But Etain only laughed: the world to her
Was one sweet smile of very present mirth;

Its flowers were only flowers, common or rare; Her soul was like a little garden closed By rose-clad walls, a place of southern air Islanded from the Mystery that reposed
Its vast and brooding wings on that abyss
Through which like little clouds that dreamed and dozed

The thoughts of Anwyl wandered toward some bliss Unknown, unfathomed, far, how far away, Where God has gathered all the eternities

Into strange heavens, beyond the night and day.

VIII

And over the rolling golden bay, In the funeral pomp of the dying day, The bell of Time was wistfully tolling A million million years away;

And over the heather-drowsy hill
Where the burdened bees were buzzing still,
The two little sun-bright barefoot children
Wandered down at the flowers' own will;

For still as the bell in the sunset tolled,
The meadow-sweet and the mary-gold
And the purple orchis kissed their ankles
And lured them over the listening wold.

And the feathery billows of blue-gold grass Bowed and murmured and bade them pass,
Where a sigh of the sea-wind softly told them
There is no Time—Time never was.

And what if a sorrow were tolled to rest
Where the rich light mellowed away in the West,
As a glory of fruit in an autumn orchard
Heaped and asleep o'er the sea's ripe breast?

Why should they heed it, what should they know
Of the years that come or the years that go,
With the warm blue sky around and above them
And the wild thyme whispering to and fro?

For they heard in the dreamy dawn of day A fairy harper faintly play,
Follow me, follow me, little children,
Over the hills and far away:

Where the dew is bright on the heather-bells,
And the breeze in the clover sways and swells,
As the waves on the blue sea wake and wander,
Over and under the braes and dells.

And the hare-bells tinkled and rang Ding dong Bell in the dell as they danced along, And their feet were stained on the hills with honey,

And crushing the clover till evensong.

And, oh the ripples that rolled in rhyme Under the wild blue banks of thyme, To the answering rhyme of the rolling ocean's Golden glory of change and chime!

For they came to a stream and her fairy lover Caught at her hand and swung her over, And the broad wet buttercups laughed and gilded Their golden knees in the deep sweet clover.

There was never a lavrock up in the skies Blithe as the laugh of their lips and eyes, As they glanced and glittered across the meadows To waken the sleepy butterflies.

There was never a wave on the sea so gay
As the light that danced on their homeward way
Where the waving ferns were a fairy forest
And a thousand years as yesterday.

She was eight years old that day,
Full of laughter and play;
Eight years old and Anwyl nine,—
Two young lovers were they.

And when the clouds like folded sheep Were drowsing over the drowsy deep, And like a rose in a golden cradle Anwyl breathed on the breast of sleep,

Or ever the petals and leaves were furled At the vesper-song of the sunset-world, The sleepy young rose of nine sweet summers Dreamed in his rose-bed cosily curled.

And what if the light of his nine bright years Glistened with laughter or glimmered with tears, Or gleamed like a mystic globe around him White as the light of the sphere of spheres?

And what if a glory of angels there, Starring an orb of ineffable air, Came floating down from the Gates of jasper That melt into flowers at a maiden's prayer?

And what if he dreamed of a fairy face Wondering out of some happy place, Quietly as a star at sunset Shines in the rosy dreams of space?

For only as far as the west wind blows The sweets of a swinging full-blown rose, Eight years old and queen of the lilies Little Etain slept—ah, how close!

At a flower-cry over the moonlit lane
In a cottage of roses dreamed Etain,
And their purple shadows kissed at her lattice
And dappled her sigh-soft counterpane;

And or ever Etain with her golden head Had nestled to sleep in her lily-white bed, She breathed a dream to her fairy lover, Please, God, bless Anwyl and me, she said.

And a song arose in the rose-white West,
And a whisper of wings o'er the sea's bright breast,
And a cry where the moon's old miracle wakened
A glory of pearl o'er the pine-forest.

Why should they heed it? What should they know Of the years to come or the years to go?

With the starry skies around and above them And the roses whispering to and fro.

Ah, was it a song of the mystic morn
When into their beating hearts the thorn
Should pierce through the red wet crumpled roses
And all the sorrow of love be born?

Ah, was it a cry of the wild wayside
Whereby one day they must surely ride,
Out of the purple garden of passion
To Calvary, to be crucified?

Only the sound of the distant sea Broke on the shores of Mystery, And tolled as a bell might toll for sorrow Till Time be tombed in Eternity;

And in their dreams they only heard
Far away, one secret bird
Sing, till the passionate purple twilight
Throbbed with the wonder of one sweet word:

One sweet word and the wonder awoke,
And the leaves and the flowers and the starlight spoke
In silent rapture the strange old secret
That none e'er knew till the death-dawn broke;

One sweet whisper, and hand in hand They wandered in dreams through fairyland, Rapt in the star-bright mystical music Which only a child can understand. But never a child in the world can tell
The wonderful tale he knows so well,
Though ever as old Time dies in the sunset
It tolls and tolls like a distant bell.

Love, love; and they hardly knew
The sense of the glory that round them grew;
But the world was a wide enchanted garden;
And the song, the song rang true.

And they danced with the fairies in emerald rings Arched by the light of their rainbow wings, And they heard the wild green Harper striking A starlight over the golden strings.

Love, oh love; and they roamed once more
Through a forest of flowers on a fairy shore,
And the sky was a wild bright laugh of wonder
And the West was a dream of the years of yore.

In other worlds I loved you, long ago:
Love that hath no beginning hath no end:
The heather whispers low and sweet and low,
In other worlds I loved you, long ago;
The meadows murmur and the firwoods know
The message that the kindling East shall send;
In other worlds I loved you, long ago:
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

IX

Out of the deep, my dream, out of the deep, Yrma, thy voice came to me in my sleep, And through a rainbow woven of human tears I saw two lovers wandering down the years; Two children, first, that roamed a sunset land, And then two lovers wandering hand in hand, Forgetful of their childhood's Paradise, For nine more years had darkened in their eyes, And heaven itself could hardly find again Anwyl, the star-child, or the flower, Etain.

For on a day in May, as through the wood With earth's new passion beating in his blood He went alone, an empty-hearted youth, Seeking he knew not what white flower of truth Or beauty, on all sides he seemed to see Swift subtle hints of some new harmony. Yet all unheard, ideal, and incomplete, A silent song compact of hopes and fears, A music such as lights the wandering feet Of Yrma when on earth she reappears. And he forgot that sad grey City of Pain, For all earth's old romance returned again. And as he went, his dreaming soul grew glad To think that he might meet with Galahad Or Parsifal in some green glade of fern. Or see between the boughs a helmet burn And hear a joyous laugh kindle the sky As through the wood Sir Launcelot rode by With face upturned to take the sun like wine. Ah, was it love that made the whole world shine Like some great angel's face, blinded with bliss, While Anwyl dreamed of bold Sir Amadis And Guinevere's white arms and Iseult's kiss. And that glad island in a golden sca Where Arthur lives and reigns eternally? Surely the heavens were one wide rose-white flame As down the path to meet him Yrma came; Ah, was it Yrma, with those radiant eyes, That came to greet and lead him through the skies. The skies that gloomed and gleamed so far above The little wandering prayers of human love? . . . He had forgotten all except the gleam Of light when once he kissed her in a dream, . . . For surely then he knew that long before Their eyes had met upon some distant shore. . . . Ah, was it Yrma whose red lips he met Between the branches, where the leaves were wet? Etain or Yrma, for it seemed her face Bent down upon him from some happy place And whispered to him, low and sweet and low. In other worlds I loved you, long ago!

And he, too, knew his love could never die, Because his queen was throned beyond the sky.

Yet in sweet mortal eyes he met her now
And kissed Etain beneath the hawthorn bough,
And dared to dream his infinite dream was true
On earth and reign with Etain, dream he knew
Why leaves were green and skies were fresh and blue;
Yea, dream he knew, as children dream they know
They knew all this a million years ago,
And watched the sea-waves wistfully westward wend

And watched the sea-waves wistfully westward wend And heard a voice whispering in their flow And calling through the silent sunset-glow

Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

Ah, could they see in the Valley of Gloom That clove the cliffs behind the City: Ah, could they hear in the forest of Doom The peril that neared without pause or pity? Behind the veils of ivv and vine, Wild musk-roses and white woodbine. In glens that were wan as with moonlit tears And rosy with ghosts of eglantine And pale as with lilies of long-past years. Ah, could they see, could they hear, could they know Behind that beautiful outward show. Behind the pomp and glory of life That seething old anarchic strife? For there in many a dim blue glade Where the rank red poppies burned, And if perchance some dreamer straved He nevermore returned. Cold incarnate memories Of earth's retributory throes, Deadly desires and agonies Dark as the worm that never dies, In the outer night arose. And waited under those wonderful skies With Hydra heads and mocking eyes That winked upon the waning West From out the gloom of the oak-forest,

Till all the wild profound of wood That o'er the haunted valley slept Glowed with eyes like pools of blood As, lusting after a hideous food. Through the haggard vistas crept Without a ery, without a hiss, The serpent broods of the abvss. Ancestral folds in darkness furled Since the beginnings of the world. Ring upon awful ring uprose That obscure heritage of foes. The exceeding bitter heritage Which still a jealous God bestows From inappellable age to age, The ghostly worms that softly move Through every grey old corse of love And creep across the coffined years To batten on our blood and tears: And there were hooded shapes of death Gaunt and grey, cruel and blind, Stealing softly as a breath Through the woods that loured behind The City: hooded shapes of fear Slowly, slowly stealing near: While all the gloom that round them rolled With intertwisting coils grew cold. And there with leer and gap-toothed grin Many a gaunt ancestral Sin With clutching fingers, white and thin, Strove to put the boughs aside; And still before them all would glide Down the wavering moon-white track One lissom figure, clad in black; Who wept at mirth and mocked at pain And murmured a song of the wind and the rain: His laugh was wild with a secret grief; His eyes were deep like woodland pools: And, once and again, as his face drew near In a rosy gloaming of eglantere. All the ghosts that gathered there

Bowed together, naming his name: Lead us, ah thou *Shadow of a Leaf*, Child and master of all our shame, Fool of Doubt and King of Fools.

Now the linnet had ended his even-song. And the lark dropt down from his last wild ditty And ruffled his wings and his speckled breast Blossom-wise over his June-sweet nest; While winging wistfully into the West As a fallen petal is wafted along The last white sea-mew sought for rest; And, over the gleaming heave and swell Of the swinging seas, Drowsily breathed the dreaming breeze. Then, suddenly, out of the Valley of Gloom That clove the cliffs behind the City, Out of the silent forest of Doom That clothed the valley with clouds of fear Swelled the boom of a distant bell Once, and the towers of the City of Pain Echoed it, without hope or pity. The tale of that tolling who can tell? That dark old music who shall declare? Who shall interpret the song of the bell?

Is it nothing to you, all ye that hear,
Sorrowed the bell, Is it nothing to you?
Is it nothing to you? the shore-wind cried,
Is it nothing to you? the cliffs replied.
But the low light laughed and the skies were blue,
And this was only the song of the bell.

\mathbf{X}

ANWYL

A darkened casement in a darker room
Was all his home, whence weary and bowed and white
He watched across the slowly gathering gloom
The slowly westering light.

Bitterness in his heavy-clouded eyes,
Bitterness as of heaven's intestine wars
Brooded; he locked upon the unfathomed skies
And whispered—to the stars—

Some day, he said, she will forget all this That she calls life, and looking far above See throned among the great eternities This dream of mine, this love;

Love that has given my soul these wings of fire To beat in glory above the sapphire sea, Until the wings of the infinite desire Close in infinity;

Love that has taken the glory of hawthorn boughs, And all the dreaming beauty of hazel skies, As ministers to the radiance of her brows And haunted April eyes;

Love that is hidden so deep beneath the dust Of little daily duties and delights, Till that reproachful face of hers grows just And God at last requites

A soul whose dream was deeper than the skies, A heart whose hope was wider than the sea, Yet could not enter through his true love's eyes Their grey infinity.

And so I know I wound her all day long
Because my heart must seem so far away;
And even my love completes the silent wrong
For all that it can say

Seems vast and meaningless to mortal sense; Its vague desire can never reach its goal Till knowledge vanishes in omniscience And God surrounds her soul, Breaking its barriers down and flooding in Through all her wounds in one almighty tide, Mingling her soul with that great Love wherein My soul waits, glorified.

XI

ETAIN

My love is dying, dying in my heart;
There is no song in heaven for such as I
Who watch the days and years of youth depart,
The bloom decay and die;

The rose that withers in the hollow cheek,

The leaden rings that mark us old and wise;

And Time that writes what Pity dares not speak

Around the fading eyes.

He dreams he loves; but only loves his dream; And in his dream he never can forget Abana seems a so much mightier stream And Pharpar wider yet;

The little deeds of love that light the shrine Of common daily duties with such gleams Of heaven, to me are scarcely less divine Than those poor wandering dreams

Of deeds that never happen! I give him this, This heart he cannot find in heaven above; This heart, this heart of all the eternities, This life of mine, this love;

Love that is lord of all the world at once
And never bade the encircled spirit roam
To the circle's bound, beyond the moons and suns,
But makes each heart its home.

And every home the heart of Space and Time, And each and all a heaven if love could reign; One infinite untranscended heaven sublime With God's own joy and pain.

Why, that was what God meant, to set us here In Eden, when he saw that all was good; And we have made the sun black with despair, And turned the moon to blood.

So has Love taught me that too learned tongue, And in his poorer wisdom made me wise; I grew so proud of the red drops we wrung From all philosophies.

My heart is narrow, foolish, what you will; But this I know God meant who set us here, And gave each soul the Infinities to fulfil From its own widening sphere.

To annex new regions to the soul's domain,
To expand the circle of the golden hours,
Till it enfolds again and yet again
New heavens, new fields, new flowers,

Oh, this is well; but still the central heart
Is here at home, not wandering like the wind
That gathers nothing, but must still depart
Leaving a waste behind.

Where is the song I sang that April morn, When all the poet in his eyes awoke My sleeping heart to heaven; and love was born? For while the glad day broke

We met; and as the softly kindling skies
Thrilled through the scented vistas of the wood
I felt the sudden love-light in his eyes
Kindle my beating blood.

Happy day, happy day,
Chasing the clouds of the night away
And bidding the dreams of the dawn depart
Over the freshening April blue,
Till the blossoms awake to welcome the May,
And the world is made anew;
And the blackbird sings on the dancing spray
With eyes of glistening dew;
"Happy, happy, happy day;"
For he knows that his love is true;
He knows that his love is true, my heart,
He knows that his love is true!

I cannot sing it: these tears blind me: love,
O love, come back before it is too late,
Why, even Christ came down to us from above:
I think His love was great;

Yet he stood knocking, knocking at the door Until his piteous hands were worn with scars; He did not hide that crown of love he wore Among the lonely stars.

This round of hours, the daily flowers I cull
Are more to me than all the rolling spheres,
A wounded bird at hand more pitiful
Than some great scraph's tears.

How should I join the great wise choir above With my starved spirit's pale inhuman dearth, Who never heard the cry of heavenly love Rise from the sweet-souled earth?

Yet it is I he needs, and I for whom

His greed exceeds, his dreams fly wide of the mark!
Is it all self? I wander in the gloom;

The ways of God grow dark;

I watch the rose that withers in the check,
The leaden rings that mark us old and wise;
And Time that writes what Pity dares not speak
Around the fading eyes.

XII

And ever as Anwyl went the unknown end Faded before him, back and back and back He saw new empty heavens for ever bend Over his endless track;

And memory, burning with new hopeless fire, Showed him how every passing infinite hour Made some new Crucifix for the World's Desire Is some new wayside flower:

He saw what joy and beauty owed to death; How all the world was one great sacrifice Of Him, in whom all creatures that draw breath Share God's eternal skies;

How Love is lord of all the world at once; And never bids the encircled spirit roam To the circle's bound, beyond the moons and suns, But makes each heart its home,

And every home the heart of Space and Time, And each and all a heaven if love could reign One infinite untranscended heaven sublime With God's own joy and pain.

XIII

Out of the deep, my dream, out of the deep,
A little child came to him in his sleep
And led him back to what was Paradise
Before the years had darkened in his eyes,
And showed him what he ne'er could lose again—
The light that once enshrined the child Etain.

Ah, was it Yrma with those radiant eyes
That came to greet and lead him through the skies;
Ay; all the world was one wide rose-white flame,
As down the path to meet him Yrma came
And caught the child up in her arms and cried,
This is my child that moved in Etain's side,
Thy child and Etain's: I the unknown ideal
And she the rich, the incarnate, breathing real
Are one; for me thou never canst attain
But by the love I yield thee for Etain;
Even as through Christ thy soul allays its dearth,
Love's heaven is only compassed upon earth;
And by that love, in thine own Etain's eyes
Thou shalt find all God's untranscended skies.

As of old, as of old, with Etain that day, Over the hills, and far away, He roamed thro' the fairy forests of fern: Two young lovers were they.

And God sighed in the sunset, and the sea Grew quieter than the hills: the mystery Of ocean, earth and sky was like a word Uttered, but all unheard, Uttered by every wave and cloud and leaf With all the immortal glory of mortal grief; And every wave that broke its heart of gold In music on the rainbow-dazzled shore Seemed telling, strangely telling, evermore A story that must still remain untold.

Oh, Once upon a time, and o'er and o'er
As aye the Happy ever after came
The enchanted waves lavished their faery lore

And tossed a foam-bow and a rosy flame
Around the whispers of the creaming foam,
Till the old rapture with the new sweet name
Through all the old romance began to roam.

XIV

And those two lovers only heard
—Oh, love is a dream that knows no waking—
Far away, one secret bird,
Where all the roses breathed one word,

And every crispel on the beach— Oh, love is a sea that is ever breaking!-Lisped it in a sweeter speech: As hand in hand, by the sunset sea That breaks on the shores of mystery, They stood in the gates of the City of Pain To watch the wild waves flutter and beat In roses of white soft light at their feet. Roses of delicate music and light. Music and moonlight under their feet. Crumbling and flashing and softly crashing In rainbow colours that dazzle and wane And wither and waken and, wild with delight. Dance and dance to a mystic tune And scatter their leaves in a flower-soft rain Over the shimmering golden shore Between the West and the waking moon, Between the sunset and the night; And then they sigh for the years of yore And gather their glory together again, Petal by petal and gleam by gleam, Till, all in one rushing rose-bright stream They dazzle back to the deep once more, For the dream of the sea is an endless dream. And love is a sea that hath no shore, And the roses dance as they danced before.

XV

In other worlds I loved you, long ago:

Love that hath no beginning hath no end:

Low to her heart he breathed it, sweet and low;

In other worlds I loved you, long ago;

This is a word that all the sea-waves know

And whisper as through the shoreless West they wend,

In other worlds I loved you, long ago:

Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

XVI

"Yet love can die!" she murmured once again;
For this was in that City by the Sea,
That old grey City of Pain,
Built on the shifting shores of Mystery
And mocked by all the immeasurable main.
"Love lives to die!"
Under the deep eternal sky
His deeper voice caught up that deep refrain;

"A year ago, and under yonder sun
Earth had no Heaven to hold our hearts in one!
For me there was no love, afar or nigh:
And, O, if love were thus in time begun,
Love, even our love, in time must surely die."
Then memory murmured, "No";
And he remembered, a million years ago,
He saw the sea-waves wistfully westward wend;
And heard her voice whispering in their flow
And calling through the silent sunset-glow.
Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

"Love dies to live!" How wild, how deep the joy
That knows no death can e'er destroy
What cannot bear destruction! By these eyes
I know that, ere the fashioning of the skies,
Or ever the sun and moon and stars were made
I loved you. Sweet, I am no more afraid.

"Love lives to die!"
Under the deep eternal sky
Her wild sweet voice caught up that deep refrain:
There, in that silent City by the Sea,
Listening the wild-wave music of Infinity,
There, in that old grey City of mortal pain,
Their voices mingled in mystic unison
With that immortal harmony
Which holds the warring worlds in one.

Their Voice, one Voice, yet manifold,
Possessed the seas, the fields, the sky,
With utterance of the dream that cannot die;
Possessed the West's wild rose and dappled gold,
And that old secret of the setting sun
Which, to the glory of Eternity,
Time, tolling like a distant bell,
Evermore faints to tell,
And, ever telling, never yet has told.
One, and yet manifold
Arose their Voice, oh strangely one again
With murmurs of the immeasurable main;
As, far beyond earth's cloudy bars,
Their Soul surpassed the sunset and the stars,
And all the heights and depths of temporal pain.

And in that mystic plane They felt their mortal years Break away as a dream of pain Breaks in a stream of tears.

Till seas of seraph music round them rolled.

Love, of whom life had birth, See now, is death not sweet? Love, is this heaven or earth? Both are beneath thy feet.

Nay, both within thy heart! O Love, the glory nears; The Gates of Pearl are flung apart, The Rose of Heaven appears.

Across the deeps of change, Like pangs of visible song, What angel-spirits, remote and strange, Thrill through the starry throng?

And oh, what wind that blows Over the mystic Tree, What whisper of the sacred Rose, What murmur of the sapphire Sea. What dreams that faint and fail From harps of burning gold, But tell in heaven the sweet old tale An earthly sunset told?

Hark! like a holy bell Over that spirit Sea, Time, in the world it loves so well, Tolls for Eternity.

Earth calls us once again, And, through the mystic Gleam, The grey old City of mortal pain Dawns on the heavenly dream.

Sweet as the voice of birds At dawn, the years return, With little songs and sacred words Of human hearts that yearn.

The sweet same waves resound Along our earthly shore; But now this earth we lost and found Is heaven for evermore.

Hark! how the cosmic choir, In sea and flower and sun, Recalls that triumph of desire Which made all music one:

One universal soul, Completing joy with pain, And harmonising with the Whole The temporal refrain,

Until from hill and plain, From bud and blossom and tree, From shadow and shining after rain, From cloud and clovered bee,

From earth and sea and sky. From laughter and from tears, One molten golden harmony Fulfils the yearning years.

Love, of whom death had birth, See now, is life not sweet? Love, is this heaven or earth? Both are beneath thy feet.

In other worlds I loved you, long ago; Love that hath no beginning hath no end; The sea-waves whisper, low and sweet and low. In other worlds I loved you, long ago; The May-boughs murmur and the roses know The message that the dawning moon shall send: In other worlds I loved you, long ago; Love that hath no beginning hath no end.

THE FOREST OF WILD THYME

DEDICATED TO HELEN, ROSIE, AND BEATRIX

PERSONS OF THE TALE

OURSELVES FATHER MOTHER LITTLE BOY BLUE

THE HIDEOUS HERMIT THE KING OF FAIRY-LAND PEASE-BLOSSOM MUSTARD-SELD Dragons, Fairies, Mammoths, Angels, etc.

APOLOGIA

ONE more hour to wander free With Puck on his unbridled bee Thro' heather-forests, leagues of bloom. Our childhood's maze of scent and sun! Forbear awhile your notes of doom, Dear Critics, give me still this one Swift hour to hunt the fairy gleam That flutters thro' the unfettered dream. It mocks me as it flies, I know:
All too soon the gleam will go;
Yet I love it and shall love
My dream that brooks no narrower bars
Than bind the darkening heavens above,
My Jack o'Lanthorn of the stars:
Then, I'll follow it no more,
I'll light the lamp: I'll close the door.

PRELUDE

Hush! if you remember how we sailed to old Japan,
Peterkin was with us then, our little brother Peterkin!
Now we've lost him, so they say: I think the tall thin man
Must have come and touched him with his curious twinkling
fan

And taken him away again, our merry little Peterkin; He'll be frightened all alone; we'll find him if we can; Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin.

No one would believe us if we told them what we know, Or they wouldn't grieve for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin! If they'd only watched us roaming through the streets of Miyako,

And travelling in a palanquin where parents never go,

And seen the golden gardens where we wandered once with

Peterkin.

And smelt the purple orchards where the cherry-blossoms blow,
They wouldn't mourn for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin.

Put away your muskets, lay aside the drum,
Hang it by the wooden sword we made for little Peterkin!
He was once our trumpeter, now his bugle's dumb,

Pile your arms beneath it, for the owlet light is come, We'll wander through the roses where we marched of old with Peterkin,

We'll search the summer sunset where the Hybla beehives hum,

And—if we meet a fairy there—we'll ask for news of Peterkin.

He was once our cabin-boy and cooked the sweets for tea;
And O, we've sailed around the world with laughing little
Peterkin;

From nursery floor to pantry door we've roamed the mighty sea,

And come to port below the stairs in distant Caribee,

But wheresoe'er we sailed we took our little lubber Peterkin, Because his wide grey eyes believed much more than ours could see,

And so we liked our Peterkin, our trusty little Peterkin.

Peterkin, Peterkin, I think if you came back

The captain of our host to-day should be the bugler Peterkin, And he should lead our smugglers up that steep and narrow track,

A band of noble brigands, bearing each a mighty pack

Crammed with lace and jewels to the secret cave of Peterkin, And he should wear the biggest boots and make his pistol crack.—

The Spanish cloak, the velvet mask, we'd give them all to Peterkin.

Come, my brother pirates, I am tired of play;
Come and look for Peterkin, little brother Peterkin,
Our merry little comrade that the fairies took away,
For people think we've lost him, and when we come to say
Our good-night prayers to mother, if we pray for little
Peterkin

Her eyes are very sorrowful, she turns her head away. Come and look for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin.

God bless little Peterkin, wherever he may be!
Come and look for Peterkin, lonely little Peterkin:
I wonder if they've taken him again across the sea
From the town of Wonder-Wander and the Amfalula tree
To the land of many marvels where we roamed of old with
Peterkin,

The land of blue pagodas and the flowery fields of tea! Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin.

PART I

THE SPLENDID SECRET

Now father stood engaged in talk
With mother on that narrow walk
Between the laurels (where we play
At Red-skins lurking for their prey)
And the grey old wall of roses
Where the Persian kitten dozes
And the sunlight sleeps upon
Crannies of the crumbling stone
—So hot it is you scarce can bear
Your naked hand upon it there,
Though there luxuriating in heat
With a slow and gorgeous beat
White-winged currant-moths display
Their spots of black and gold all day.—

Well, since we greatly wished to know Whether we too might some day go Where little Peterkin had gone Without one word and all alone, We crept up through the laurels there Hoping that we might overhear The splendid secret, darkly great, Of Peterkin's mysterious fate; And on what high adventure bound He left our pleasant garden-ground, Whether for old Japan once more He voyaged from the dim blue shore, Or whether he set out to run By candle-light to Babylon.

We just missed something father said About a young prince that was dead, A little warrior that had fought And failed: how hopes were brought to nought He said, and mortals made to bow
Before the Juggernaut of Death,
And all the world was darker now,
For Time's grey lips and icy breath
Had blown out all the enchanted lights
That burned in Love's Arabian nights;
And now he could not understand
Mother's mystic fairy-land,
"Land of the dead, poor fairy-tale,"
He murmured, and her face grew pale,
And then with great soft shining eyes
She leant to him—she looked so wise—
And, with her check against his cheek,

We heard her, ah so softly, speak.

"Husband, there was a happy day,
Long ago, in love's young May,
When with a wild-flower in your hand
You echoed that dead poet's cry—
'Little flower, but if I could understand!'
And you saw it had roots in the depths of the sky
And there in that smallest bud lay furled
The secret and meaning of all the world."

He shook his head and then he tried To kiss her, but she only cried And turned her face away and said, "You come between me and my dead! His soul is near me, night and day, But you would drive it far away; And you shall never kiss me now Until you lift that brave old brow Of faith I know so well; or else Refute the tale the skylark tells, Tarnish the glory of that May, Explain the Smallest Flower away." And still he said, "Poor fairy-tales, How terribly their starlight pales Before the solemn sun of truth That rises o'er the grave of youth!"

"Is heaven a fairy-tale?" she said,—And once again he shook his head; And yet we ne'er could understand Why heaven should not be fairy-land, A part of heaven at least, and why The thought of it made mother cry, And why they went away so sad,

And father still quite unforgiven, For what could children be but glad To find a fairy-land in heaven?

And as we talked it o'er we found Our brains were really spinning round; But Dick, our, eldest, late returned From school, by all the lore he'd learned Declared that we should seek the lost Smallest Flower at any cost. For, since within its leaves lay furled The secret of the whole wide world, He thought that we might learn therein The whereabouts of Peterkin; And, if we found the Flower, we knew Father would be forgiven, too; And mother's kiss atone for all The quarrel by the rose-hung wall; We knew, not how we knew not why,

But Dick it was who bade us try, Dick made it all seem plain and clear, And Dick it is who helps us here To tell this tale of fairy-land In words we scarce can understand. For ere another golden hour

Had passed, our anxious parents found We'd left the scented garden-ground To seek—the Smallest Flower.

PART II

THE FIRST DISCOVERY

O, grown-ups cannot understand
And grown-ups never will,
How short's the way to fairy-land
Across the purple hill:
They smile: their smile is very bland,
Their eyes are wise and chill;
And yet—at just a child's command—
The world's an Eden still.

Under the cloudy lilac-tree,
Out at the garden-gate,
We stole, a little band of three,
To tempt our fairy fate.
There was no human eye to see,
No voice to bid us wait;
The gardener had gone home to tea,
The hour was very late.

I wonder if you've ever dreamed,
In summer's noonday sleep,
Of what the thyme and heather seemed
To ladybirds that creep
Like little crimson shimmering gems
Between the tiny twisted stems
Of fairy forests deep;
And what it looks like as they pass
Through jungles of the golden grass.

If you could suddenly become
As small a thing as they,
A midget-child, a new Tom Thumb,
A little gauze-winged fay,
Oh then, as through the mighty shades
Of wild thyme woods and violet glades
You groped your forest-way,
How fraught each fragrant bough would be
With dark o'erhanging mystery.

How high the forest aisles would loom,
What wondrous wings would beat
Through gloamings loaded with perfume
In many a rich retreat,
While trees like purple censers bowcd
And swung beneath a swooning cloud
Mysteriously sweet,
Where flowers that haunt no mortal clime
Burden the Forest of Wild Thyme.

We'd watched the bats and beetles flit
Through sunset-coloured air
The night that we discovered it
And all the heavens were bare:
We'd seen the colours melt and pass
Like silent ghosts across the grass
To sleep—our hearts knew where;
And so we rose, and hand in hand
We sought the gates of fairy-land.

For Peterkin, oh Peterkin,
The cry was in our ears,
A fairy clamour, clear and thin
From lands beyond the years;
A wistful note, a dying fall
As of the fairy bugle-call
Some dreamful changeling hears,
And pines within his mortal home
Once more through fairy-land to roam.

We left behind the pleasant row
Of cottage window-panes,
The village inn's red-curtained glow,
The lovers in the lanes;
And stout of heart and strong of will
We climbed the purple perfumed hill,
And hummed the sweet refrains
Of fairy tunes the tall thin man
Taught us of old in Old Japan.

So by the tall wide-barred church-gate
Through which we all could pass
We came to where that curious plate,
That foolish plate of brass,
Said Peterkin was fast asleep
Beneath a cold and ugly heap
Of earth and stones and grass.
It was a splendid place for play,
That churchyard, on a summer's day;

A splendid place for hide-and-seek
Between the grey old stones;
Where even grown-ups used to speak
In awestruck whispering tones;
And here and there the grass ran wild
In jungles for the creeping child,
And there were elfin zones
Of twisted flowers and words in rhyme
And great sweet cushions of wild thyme.

So in a wild thyme snuggery there
We stayed awhile to rest;
A bell was calling folk to prayer:
One star was in the West:
The cottage lights grew far away,
The whole sky seemed to waver and sway
Above our fragrant nest;
And from a distant dreamland moon
Once more we heard that fairy tune:

Why, mother once had sung it us
When, ere we went to bed,
She told the tale of Pyramus,
How Thisbe found him dead
And mourned his eyes as green as leeks,
His cherry nose, his cowslip cheeks.

That tune would oft around us float Since on a golden noon We saw the play that Shakespeare wrote Of Lion, Wall, and Moon; Ah, hark—the ancient fairy theme—Following darkness like a dream!

The very song Will Shakespeare sang, The music that through Sherwood rang And Arden and that forest glade Where Hermie and Lysander straved. And Puck cried out with impish glee, Lord, what fools these mortals be! Though the masquerade was mute Of Quince and Snout and Snug and Flute. And Bottom with his donkey's head Decked with roses, white and red. Though the fairies had forsaken Sherwood now and faintly shaken The forest-scents from off their feet. Yet from some divine retreat Came the music, sweet and clear, To hang upon the raptured ear With the free unfettered swav Of blossoms in the moon of May. Hark! the luscious fluttering Of flower-soft words that kiss and cling, And part again with sweet farewells, And rhyme and chime like fairy-bells.

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows, Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine, With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine."

Out of the undiscovered land
So sweetly rang the song,
We dreamed we wandered, hand in hand,
The fragrant aisles along,
Where long ago had gone to dwell
In some enchanted distant dell
The outlawed fairy throng
When out of Sherwood's wildest glen
They sank, forsaking mortal men

And as we dreamed, the shadowy ground Seemed gradually to swell;
And a strange forest rose around,
But how—we could not tell—
Purple against a rose-red sky
The big boughs brooded silently:
Far off we heard a bell;
And, suddenly, a great red light
Smouldered before our startled sight.

Then came a cry, a fiercer flash,
And down between the trees
We saw great crimson figures crash,
Wild-eyed monstrosities;
Great dragon-shapes that breathed a flame
From roaring nostrils as they came:
We sank upon our knees;
And looming o'er us, ten yards high,
Like battleships they thundered by.

And then, as down that mighty dell
We followed, faint with fear,
We understood the tolling bell
That called the monsters there;
For right in front we saw a house
Woven of wild mysterious boughs
Bursting out everywhere
In crimson flames, and with a shout
The monsters rushed to put it out.

And, in a flash, the truth was ours;
And there we knew—we knew—
The meaning of those trees like flowers,
Those boughs of rose and blue,
And from the world we'd left above
A voice came erooning like a dove
To prove the dream was true:
And this—we knew it by the rhyme
Must be—the Forest of Wild Thyme.

For out of the mystical rose-red dome
Of heaven the voice came murmuring down:
Oh, Ladybird, Ladybird, fly away home;
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.

We knew, we knew it by the rhyme,
Though we seemed, after all,
No tinier, yet the sweet wild thyme
Towered like a forest tall
All round us; oh, we knew not how,
And yet—we knew those monsters now:
Our dream's divine recall
Had dwarfed us, as with magic words;
The dragons were but ladybirds!

And all around us as we gazed, Half glad, half frightened, all amazed. The scented clouds of purple smoke In lurid gleams of crimson broke: And o'er our heads the huge black trees Obscured the sky's red mysteries: While here and there gigantic wings Beat o'er us, and great scaly things Fold over monstrous leathern fold Out of the smouldering copses rolled; And eyes like blood-red pits of flame From many a forest-cavern came To glare across the blazing glade, Till, with the sudden thought dismayed, We wondered if we e'er should find The mortal home we left behind: Fear clutched us in a grisly grasp, We gave one wild and white-lipped gasp. Then turned and ran, with streaming hair, Away, away, and anywhere!

And hurry-skurry, heart and heel and hand, we tore along,
And still our flying feet kept time and pattered on for
Peterkin,

For Peterkin, oh Peterkin, it made a kind of song

To prove the road was right although it seemed so dark and wrong,

As through the desperate woods we plunged and ploughed

for little Peterkin,

Where many a hidden jungle-beast made noises like a gong That rolled and roared and rumbled as we rushed along to Peterkin.

Peterkin, Peterkin, if you could only hear
And answer us, one little word from little lonely Peterkin
To take and comfort father, he is sitting in his chair
In the library: he's listening for your footstep on the stair
And your patter down the passage, he can only think of
Peterkin:

Come back, come back to father, for to-day he'd let us tear His newest book to make a paper-boat for little Peterkin.

PART III

THE HIDEOUS HERMIT

AH, what wonders round us rose
When we dared to pause and look,
Curious things that seemed all toes,
Goblins from a picture-book;
Ants like witches, four feet high,
Waving all their skinny arms,
Glared at us and wandered by,
Muttering their ancestral charms.

Stately forms in green and gold
Armour strutted through the glades,
Just as Hamlet's ghost, we're told,
Mooned among the midnight shades:

Once a sort of devil came Scattering broken trees about, Winged with leather, eyed with flame,—
He was but a moth, no doubt.

Here and there, above us clomb
Feathery clumps of palm on high:
Those were ferns, of course, but some
Really seemed to touch the sky;
Yes; and down one fragrant glade,
Listening as we onward stole,
Half delighted, half afraid,
Dong, we heard the hare-bells toll!

Something told us what that gleam
Down the glen was brooding o'er;
Something told us in a dream
What the bells were tolling for!
Something told us there was fear,
Horror, peril, on our way!
Was it far or was it near?
Near, we heard the night-wind say.

Toll, the music reeled and pealed
Through the vast and sombre trees,
Where a rosy light revealed
Dimmer, sweeter mysteries;
And, like petals of the rose,
Fairy fans in beauty beat,
Light in light—ah, what were those
Rhymes we heard the night repeat?

Toll, a dream within a dream,
Up an aisle of rose and blue,
Up the music's perfumed stream
Came the words, and then we knew,

Knew that in that distant glen Once again the case was tried, Hark!—Who killed Cock Robin, then?
And a tiny voice replied,

"I
killed
Cock
Robin!"

"I! And who are You, sir, pray?"
Growled a voice that froze our marrow:
"Who!" we heard the murderer say,
"Lord, sir, I'm the famous Sparrow,
And this 'ere's my bow and arrow!

"I killed Cock Robin!"

Then, with one great indrawn breath, Such a sighin' and a sobbin' Rose all round us for the death Of poor, poor Cock Robin, Oh, we couldn't bear to wait Even to hear the murderer's fate, Which we'd often wished to know Sitting in the fireside glow And with hot revengeful looks Searched for in the nursery-books; For the Robin and the Wren Are such friends to mortal men, Such dear friends to mortal men!

Toll; and through the woods once more
Stole we, drenched with fragrant dew:
Toll; the hare-bell's burden bore
Deeper meanings than we knew:
Still it told us there was fear,
Horror, peril on our way!
Was it far or was it near?
Near, we heard the night-wind say!

Near; and once or twice we saw
Something like a monstrous eye,
Something like a hideous claw
Steal between us and the sky:
Still we hummed a dauntless tune
Trying to think such things might be
Glimpses of the fairy moon
Hiding in some hairy tree.

Yet around us as we went
Through the glades of rose and blue
Sweetness with the horror blent
Wonder-wild in scent and hue:
Here Aladdin's cavern yawned,
Jewelled thick with gorgeous dyes;
There a head of clover dawned
Like a cloud in eastern skies.

Hills of topaz, lakes of dew,
Fairy cliffs of crystal sheen
Passed we; and the forest's blue
Sea of branches tossed between:
Once we saw a gryphon make
One soft iris as it passed
Like the curving meteor's wake
O'er the forest, far and fast.

Winged with purple, breathing flame,
Crimson-eyed we saw him go,
Where—ah! could it be the same
Cockchafer we used to know?—
Valley-lilies overhead,
High aloof in clustered spray,
Far through heaven their splendour spread,
Glimmering like the Milky Way.

Mammoths father calls "extinct,"
Creatures that the cave-men feared,
Through that forest walked and blinked,
Through that jungle crawled and leered;

Beasts no Nimrod ever knew, Woolly bears back and red; Crocodiles, we wondered who Ever dared to see them fed,

Were they lizards? If they were,
They could swallow us with ease;
But they slumbered quietly there
In among the mighty trees;
Red and silver, blue and green,
Played the moonlight on their seales;
Golden eyes they had, and lean
Crookèd legs with cruel nails.

Yet again, oh, faint and far,
Came the shadow of a cry,
Like the calling of a star
To its brother in the sky;
Like an echo in a cave
Where young mermen sound their shells,
Like the wind across a grave
Bright with scent of lily-bells.

Like a fairy hunter's horn
Sounding in some purple glen
Sweet revelly to the morn
And the fairy quest again:
Then, all round it surged a song
We could never understand
Though it lingered with us long,
And it seemed so sad and grand.

SONG

Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn, Summon the day of deliverance in: We are weary of bearing the burden of scorn
As we yearn for the home that we never shall win;
For here there is weeping and sorrow and sin.
And the poor and the weak are a spoil for the strong!
Ah, when shall the song of the ransomed begin?
The world is grown weary with waiting so long.

Little Boy Blue, you are gallant and brave,
There was never a doubt in those clear bright eyes.
Come, challenge the grim dark Gates of the Grave
As the skylark sings to those infinite skies!
This world is a dream, say the old and the wise,
And its rainbows arise o'er the false and the true;
But the mists of the morning are made of our sighs,—
Ah, shatter them, scatter them, Little Boy Blue!

Little Boy Blue, if the child-heart knows,
Sound but a note as a little one may;
And the thorns of the desert shall bloom with the rose,
And the Healer shall wipe all tears away;
Little Boy Blue, we are all astray,
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn,
Ah, set the world right, as a little one may;
Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn!

Yes; and there between the trees
Circled with a misty gleam
Like the light a mourner sees
Round an angel in a dream;
Was it he? oh, brave and slim,
Straight and clad in æry blue,
Lifting to his lips the dim
Golden horn? We never knew!

Never; for a witch's hair Flooded all the moonlit sky, And he vanished, then and there, In the twinkling of an eye: Just as either boyish cheek
Puffed to set the world aright,
Ere the golden horn could speak
Round him flowed the purple night.

At last we came to a round black road That tunnelled through the woods and showed, Or so we thought, a good clear way Back to the upper lands of day: Great silken cables overhead In many a mighty mesh were spread Netting the rounded arch, no doubt To keep the weight of leafage out. And, as the tunnel narrowed down, So thick and close the cords had grown No leaf could through their meshes stray. And the faint moonlight died away; Only a strange grey glimmer shone To guide our weary footsteps on, Until, tired out, we stood before The end, a great grey silken door.

Then from out a weird old wicket, overgrown with shaggy hair

Like a weird and wicked eyebrow round a weird and wicked eye,

Two great eyeballs and a beard For one ghastly moment peered

At our faces with a sudden stealthy stare:

Then the door was open wide,

And a hideous hermit cried
With a shy and soothing smile from out his lair.

With a shy and soothing smile from out his lair, Won't you walk into my parlour? I can make you cosy there!

And we couldn't quite remember where we'd heard that phrase before,

As the great grey-bearded ogre stood beside his open door; But an echo seemed to answer from a land beyond the sky— Won't you walk into my parlour? said the spider to the fly.

Then we looked a little closer at the ogre as he stood With his great red eyeballs glowing like two torches in a wood, And his mighty speckled belly and his dreadful clutching claws And his nose—a horny parrot's beak, his whiskers and his jaws:

Yet he seemed so sympathetic, and we saw two tears descend, As he murmured, "I'm so ugly, but I've lost my dearest friend!

I tell you most lymphatic'ly, I've yearnings in my soul,"—And right along his parrot's beak we saw the tear-drops roll; He's an arrant sentimentalist, we heard a distant sigh,

Won't you weep upon my bosom? said the spider to the fly.

"If you'd dreamed my dreams of beauty, if you'd seen my works of art,

If you'd felt the cruel hunger that is gnawing at my heart, And the grief that never leaves me and the love I can't forget, (For I loved with all the letters in the Chinese alphabet!) Oh, you'd all come in to comfort me: you ought to help the weak:

And I'm full of melting moments; and—I—know—the—thing
—you—seek!"

And the haunting echo answered, Well, I'm sure you ought to try:

There's a duty to one's neighbour, said the spider to the fly.

So we walked into his parlour
Though a gleam was in his eye;
And it was the prettiest parlour
That ever we did spy!

But we saw by the uncertain

Misty light, shot through with gleams

Of many a silken curtain

Broidered o'er with dreadful dreams,

That he locked the door behind us! So we stood with bated breath

In a silence deep as death.

There were scarlet gleams and crimson
In the curious foggy grey,
Like the blood-red light that swims on
Old canals at fall of day,

Where the smoke of some great city loops and droops in gorgeous veils

Round the heavy purple barges' tawny sails.

Were those creatures gagged and muffled,
See—there—by that severed head?
Was it but a breeze that ruffled
Those dark curtains, splashed with red,
Ruffled the dark figures on them, made them moan like things
in pain?

How we wished that we were safe at home again.

"Oh, we want to hear of Peterkin; good sir, you say you know; Won't you tell us, won't you put us in the way we want to go?" So we pleaded, for he seemed so very full of sighs and tears That we couldn't doubt his kindness, and we smothered all our fears:

But he said, "You must be crazy if you come to me for help; Why should I desire to send you to your horrid little whelp?"

And again the foolish echo made a far-away reply,

Oh, don't come to me for comfort,

Pray don't look to me for comfort,

Heavens! you mustn't be so selfish, said the spider to the fly.

"Still, when the King of Scotland, so to speak, was in a hole, He was aided by my brother; it's a story to console The convict of the treadmill and the infant with a sum, For it teaches you to try again until your kingdom's come! The monarch dawdled in that hole for centuries of time Until my own twin-brother rose and showed him how to climb:

He showed him how to swing and sway upon a tiny thread Across a mighty precipice, and light upon his head Without a single fracture and without a single pain If he only did it frequently and tried and tried again:" And once again the whisper like a moral wandered by, Perseverance is a virtue, said the spider to the fly.

Then he moaned, "My heart is hungry; but I fear I cannot eat.

(Of course I speak entirely now of spiritual meat!)
For I only fed an hour ago, but if we calmly sat
While I told you all my troubles in a confidential chat
It would give me such an appetite to hear you sympathise,
And I should sleep the better—see, the tears are in my eyes!
Dead yearnings are such dreadful things, let's keep 'em all
alive.—

Let's sit and talk awhile, my dears; we'll dine, I think, at five."

And he brought his chair beside us in his most engaging style,

And began to tell his story with a melancholy smile.-

"You remember Miss Muffet Who sat on a tuffet Partaking of curds and whey; Well, I am the spider
Who sat down beside her
And frightened Miss Muffet away!

"There was nothing against her!
An elderly spinster
Were such a grammatical mate
For a spider and spinner,
I swore I would win her,
I knew I had met with my fate!

"That love was the purest
And strongest and surest
I'd felt since my first thread was spun;
I know I'm a bogey,
But she's an old fogey,
So why in the world did she run?

"When Bruce was in trouble,
A spider, my double,
Encouraged him greatly, they say!
Now, why should the spider
Who sat down beside her
Have frightened Miss Muffet away?"

He seemed to have much more to tell, But we could scarce be listening well, Although we tried with all our might To look attentive and polite; For still afar we heard the thin Clear fairy-call to Peterkin; Clear as a skylark's mounting song It drew our wandering thoughts along. Afar, it seemed, yet, ah, so nigh, Deep in our dreams it scaled the sky, In captive dreams that brooked no bars It touched the love that moves the stars.

And with sweet music's golden tether It bound our hearts and heaven together.

SONG

Wake, arise, the lake, the skies
Fade into the faery day;
Come and sing before our king,
Heed not Time, the dotard grey;
Time has given his crown to heaven—
Ah, how long? Awake, away!

Then, as the Hermit rambled on In one long listless monotone, We heard a wild and mournful groan Come rumbling down the tunnelled way; A voice, an awful mournful bray, Singing some old funereal lay; Then solemn footsteps, muffled, dull, Approached as if they trod on wool, And as they nearer, nearer drew, We saw our Host was listening too!

His bulging eyes began to glow
Like great red match-heads rubbed at night,
And then he stole with a grim "O-ho!"
To that grey old wicket where, out of sight,
Blandly rubbing his hands and humming,
He could see, at one glance, whatever was coming.

He had never been so jubilant or frolicsome before, As he scurried on his cruel hairy crutches to the door; And flung it open wide

And most hospitably cried,

"Won't you walk into my parlour? I've some little friends to tea,—

They'll be highly entertaining to a man of sympathy, Such as you yourself must be!" Then the man, for so he seemed,
(Doubtless one who'd lost his way
And was dwarfed as we had been!)
In his ancient suit of black,
Black upon the verge of green,
Entered like a ghost that dreamed
Sadly of some bygone day;
And he never ceased to sing
In that awful mournful bray.

The door closed behind his back;
He walked round us in a ring,
And we hoped that he might free us,
But his tears appeared to blind him,
For he didn't seem to see us,
And the Hermit crept behind him
Like a cat about to spring.

And the song he sang was this;
And his nose looked very grand
As he sang it, with a bliss
Which we could not understand;
For his voice was very sad,
While his nose was proud and glad.

Rain, April, rain, thy sunny, sunny tears!
Through the black boughs the robe of Spring appears,
Yet, for the ghosts of all the bygone years,
Rain, April, rain.

Rain, April, rain; the rose will soon be glad; Spring will rejoice, a Spring I, too, have had; A little while, till I no more be sad, Rain, April, rain.

And then the spider sprang
Before we could breathe or speak,
And one great scream out-rang
As the terrible howny beak

Crunched into the Sad Man's head,
And the terrible hairy claws
Clutched him around his middle;
And he opened his lantern-jaws,
And he gave one twist, one twiddle,
One kick, and his sorrow was dead.

And there, as he sucked his bleeding prey,
The spider leered at us—"You will do,
My sweet little dears, for another day;
But this is the sort I like; huh! huh!"

And there we stood, in frozen fear, Whiter than death, With bated breath: And lo! as we thought of Peterkin, Father and home and Peterkin, Once more that music clear and thin, Clear as a skylark's mounting song, But nearer now, more sweet, more strong, Drew all our wandering thoughts along, Until it seemed, a mystic sea Of hidden delight and harmony Began to ripple and rise all round The prison where our hearts lay bound: And from sweet heaven's most rosy rim There swelled a distant marching hymn Which made the hideous Hermit pause And listen with lank down-dropt jaws. Till, with great bulging eyes of fear, He sought the wicket again to peer Along the tunnel, as like sweet rain We heard the still approaching strain, And, under it, the rhythmic beat Of multitudinous marching feet. Nearer, nearer, they rippled and rang, And this was the marching song they sang:-

SONG

A fairy band are we In fairy-land: Singing march we, hand in hand; Singing, singing all day long: (Some folk never heard a fairy-song!)

Singing, singing,
When the merry thrush is swinging
On a springing spray;
Or when the witch that lives in gloomy caves
And creeps by night among the graves
Calls a cloud across the day;
Cease we never our fairy song,
March we ever, along, along,
Down the dale, or up the hill,
Singing, singing still.

And suddenly the Hermit turned and ran with all his might Through the back-door of his parlour as we thought of little Peterkin;

And the great grey roof was shattered by a shower of rosy light,

And the spider-house went floating, torn and tattered through the night

In a flight of prismy streamers, as a shout went up for Peterkin;

And lo, the glistening fairy-host stood there arrayed for fight,
In arms of rose and green and gold, to lead us on to
Peterkin.

And all around us, rippling like a pearl and opal sea,
The host of fairy faces winked a kindly hint of Peterkin;
And all around the rosy glade a laugh of fairy glee
Watched spider-streamers floating up from fragrant tree to
tree

Till the moonlight caught the gossamers and, oh we wished for Peterkin!

Each rope became a rainbow; but it made us ache to see
Such a fairy forest-pomp without explaining it to Peterkin.

Then all the glittering crowd
With a courtly gesture bowed
Like a rosy jewelled cloud
Round a flame,
As the King of Fairy-land,
Very dignified and grand,
Stepped forward to demand
Whence we came.

He'd a cloak of gold and green Such as caterpillars spin, For the fairy ways, I ween, Are very frugal; He'd a bow that he had borne Since the crimson Eden morn, And a honeysuckle horn For his bugle.

So we told our tale of faëry to the King of Fairy-land,

And asked if he could let us know the latest news of Peterkin; And he turned him with a courtly smile and waved his jewelled wand

And cried, Pease-blossom, Mustard-seed! You know the old command;

Well; these are little children; you must lead them on to

Then he knelt, the King of Faëry knelt; his eyes were great and grand

As he took our hands and kissed them, saying, Father loves your Peterkin!

So out they sprang, on either side, A light fantastic fairy guide, To lead us to the land unknown Where little Peterkin was gone; And, as we went with timid pace,
We saw that every fairy face
In all that moonlit host was wet
With tears: we never shall forget
The mystic hush that seemed to fade
Away like sound, as down the glade
We passed beyond their zone of light.
Then through the forest's purple night
We trotted, at a pleasant speed,
With gay Pease-blossom and Mustard-seed.

PART IV

PEASE-BLOSSOM AND MUSTARD-SEED

SHYLY we surveyed our guides
As through the gloomy woods we went
In the light that the straggling moonbeams lent:
We envied them their easy strides!

Pease-blossom in his crimson cap

And delicate suit of rose-leaf green, His crimson sash and his jewelled dagger, Strutted along with an elegant swagger Which showed that he didn't eare one rap For anything less than a Fairy Queen:

His eyes were deep like the eyes of a poet,

Although his erisp and curly hair Certainly didn't seem to show it!

While Mustard-seed was a devil-may-care Epigrammatic and pungent fellow Clad in a splendid suit of yellow, With emerald stars on his glittering breast

And eyes that shone with a diamond light: They made you feel sure it would always be best

To tell him the truth: he was not perhaps *quite* So polite as Pease-blossom, but then who could be *Quite* such a debonair fairy as he?

We never could tell you one-half that we heard And saw on that journey. For instance, a bird Ten times as big as an elephant stood By the side of a nest like a great thick wood: The clouds in glimmering wreaths were spread Behind its vast and shadowy head Which rolled at us trembling below. (Its eyes Were like great black moons in those pearl-pale skies.) And we feared he might take us, perhaps, for a worm.

But he ruffled his breast with the sound of a storm, And snuggled his head with a careless disdain Under his huge hunched wing again; And Mustard-seed said, as we stole thro' the dark, There was nothing to fear: it was only a Lark!

And so he cheered the way along
With many a neat little epigram,
While dear Pease-blossom before him swam
On a billow of lovely moonlit song,
Telling us why they had left their home
In Sherwood, and had hither come
To dwell in this magical scented clime,
This dim old Forest of sweet Wild Thyme.

"Men toil," he said, "from morn till night With bleeding hands and blinded sight For gold, more gold! They have betrayed The trust that in their souls was laid; Their fairy birthright they have sold For little disks of mortal gold; And now they cannot even see The gold upon the greenwood tree, The wealth of coloured lights that pass In soft gradations through the grass, The riches of the love untold That wakes the day from grey to gold; And howsoe'er the moonlight weaves Magic webs among the leaves

Englishmen care little now
For elves beneath the hawthorn bough:
Nor if Robin should return
Dare they of an outlaw learn;
For them the Smallest Flower is furled,
Mute is the music of the world;
And unbelief has driven away
Beauty from the blossomed spray."

Then Mustard-seed with diamond eyes Taught us to be laughter-wise. And he showed us how that Time Is much less powerful than a rhyme; And that Space is but a dream; "For look," he said, with eyes agleam, "Now you are become so small You think the Thyme a forest tall; But underneath your feet you see A world of wilder mystery Where, if you were smaller yet, You would just as soon forget This forest, which you'd leave above As you have left the home you love! For, since the Thyme you used to know Seems a forest here below, What if you should sink again And find there stretched a mighty plain Between each grass-blade and the next? You'd think till you were quite perplexed! Especially if all the flowers That lit the sweet Thyme-forest bowers Were in that wild transcendent change Turned to Temples, great and strange, With many a pillared portal high And domes that swelled against the sky! How foolish, then, you will agree, Are those who think that all must see The world alike, or those who scorn Another who, perchance, was born Where—in a different dream from theirs— What they call sins to him are prayers!

We cannot judge; we cannot know; All things mingle; all things flow; There's only one thing constant here—Love—that untranscended sphere: Love, that while all ages run Holds the wheeling worlds in one; Love that, as your sages tell, Soars to heaven and sinks to hell."

Even as he spoke, we seemed to grow Smaller, the Thyme trees seemed to go Farther away from us: new dreams Flashed out on us with mystic gleams Of mighty Temple-domes: deep awe Held us all breathless as we saw A carven portal glimmering out Between new flowers that put to rout Our other fancies: in sweet fear We tiptoed past, and seemed to hear A sound of singing from within That told our souls of Peterkin: Our thoughts of him were still the same Howe'er the shadows went and came, So, on we wandered, hand in hand, And all the world was fairy-land.

And as we went we seemed to hear
Surging up from distant dells
A solemn music, soft and clear
As if a field of lily-bells
Were tolling all together, sweet
But sad and low and keeping time
To multitudinous marching feet
With a slow funereal beat
And a deep harmonious chime
That told us by its dark refrain
The reason fairies suffered pain.

SONG

Bear her along
Keep ye your song
Tender and sweet and low:
Fairies must die!
Ask ye not why
Ye that have hurt her so.

Passing away—flower from the spray! Colour and light from the leaf!

Soon, soon will the year shed its bloom on her bier, and the dust of its dreams on our grief.

Men upon earth
Bring us to birth
Gently at even and morn!
When as brother and brother
They greet one another
And smile—then a fairy is born!

But at each cruel word
Upon earth that is heard,
Each deed of unkindness or hate,
Some fairy must pass
From the games in the grass
And steal thro' the terrible Gate.

Passing away—flower from the spray! Colour and light from the leaf!

Soon, soon will the year shed its bloom on her bier, and the dust of its dreams on our grief.

If ye knew, if ye knew
All the wrong that ye do
By the thought that ye harbour alone,
How the face of some fairy
Grows wistful and weary
And the heart in her cold as a stone!

sic

Ah, she was born
Blithe as the morn
Under an April sky,
Born of the greeting
Of two lovers meeting.
They parted, and so she must die.

Passing away—flower from the spray! Colour and light from the leaf!

Soon, soon will the year shed its bloom on her bier, and the dust of its dreams on our grief.

Cradled in blisses,
Yea, born of your kisses,
Oh, ye lovers that met by the moon,
She would not have cried
In the darkness and died
If ye had not forgotten so soon.

Cruel mortals, they say,
Live for ever and aye,
And they pray in the dark on their knees.
But the flowers that are fled
And the loves that are dead,
What heaven takes pity on these?

Bear her along—singing your song—tender and sweet and low! Fairies must die! Ask ye not why—yo that have hurt her so.

Passing away—
Flower from the spray!
Colour and light from the leaf!
Soon, soon will the year
Shed its bloom on her bier
And the dust of its dreams on our grief.

Then we came through a glittering crystal grot
By a path like a pale moonbeam,
And a broad blue bridge of Forget-me-not
Over a shimmering stream,

To where, through the deep blue dusk, a gleam
Rose like the soul of the setting sun;
A sunset breaking through the earth,
A crimson sea of the poppies of dream,
Deep as the sleep that gave them birth
In the night where all earthly dreams are done.

And then, like a pearl-pale porch of the moon,
Faint and sweet as a starlit shrine,
Over the gloom
Of the crimson bloom
We saw the Gates of Ivory shine;
And, lulled and lured by the lullaby tune
Of the cradling airs that drowsily creep
From blossom to blossom, and lazily croon
Through the heart of the midnight's mystic noon,
We came to the Gates of the City of Sleep.

Faint and sweet as a lily's repose
On the broad black breast of a midnight lake,
The City delighted the cradling night:
Like a straggling palace of cloud it rose;
The towers were crowned with a crystal light
Like the starry crown of a white snowflake
As they pierced in a wild white pinnacled crowd,
Through the dusky wreaths of enchanted cloud
That swirled all round like a witch's hair.

And we heard, as the sound of a great sea sighing,
The sigh of the sleepless world of care;
And we saw strange shadowy figures flying
Up to the Ivory Gates and beating
With pale hands, long and famished and thin;
Like blinded birds we saw them dash
Against the cruelly gleaming wall:
We heard them wearily moan and call
With sharp starved lips for ever entreating
The pale doorkeeper to let them in.

And still, as they beat, again and again,
We saw on the moon-pale lintels a splash
Of crimson blood like a poppy-stain
Or a wild red rose from the gardens of pain
That sigh all night like a ghostly sea
From the City of Sleep to Gethsemane.

And lo, as we neared the mighty crowd An old blind man came, crying aloud To greet us, as once the blind man cried In the Bible picture—you know we tried To paint that print, with its Eastern sun; But the reds and the vellows would mix and run. And the blue of the sky made a horrible mess Right over the edge of the Lord's white dress. And the old blind man, just as though he had eyes, Came straight to meet us; and all the cries Of the crowd were hushed; and a strange sweet calm Stole through the air like a breath of the balm That was wafted abroad from the Forest of Thyme (For it rolled all round that curious clime With its magical clouds of perfumed trees.) And the blind man cried, "Our help is at hand, Oh, brothers, remember the old command, Remember the frankincense and myrrh. Make way, make way for those little ones there; Make way, make way, I have seen them afar Under a great white Eastern star: For I am the mad blind man who sees!" Then he whispered, softly—Of such as these; And through the hush of the cloven crowd We passed to the gates of the City, and there Our fairy heralds cried aloud-Open your Gates; don't stand and stare; These are the Children for whom our King Made all the star-worlds dance in a ring!

And lo, like a sorrow that melts from the heart In tears, the slow gates melted apart; And into the City we passed like a dream; And then, in one splendid marching stream The whole of that host came following through. We were only children, just like you; Children, ah, but we felt so grand As we led them—although we could understand Nothing at all of the wonderful song That rose all round as we marched along.

SONG

You that have seen how the world and its glory
Change and grow old like the love of a friend;
You that have come to the end of the story,
You that were tired ere you came to the end;
You that are weary of laughter and sorrow,
Pain and pleasure, labour and sin,
Sick of the midnight and dreading the morrow,
Ah, come in; come in.

You that are bearing the load of the ages;
You that have loved overmuch and too late;
You that confute all the saws of the sages;
You that served only because you must wait,
Knowing your work was a wasted endeavour;
You that have lost and yet triumphed therein,
Add loss to your losses and triumph for ever;
Ah, come in; come in.

And we knew as we went up that twisted street,
With its violet shadows and pearl-pale walls,
We were coming to Something strange and sweet,
For the dim air echoed with elfin calls;
And, far away, in the heart of the City,
A murmur of laughter and revelry rose,—
A sound that was faint as the smile of Pity.
And sweet as a swan-song's golden close.

And then, once more, as we marched along, There surged all round us that wonderful song; And it swung to the tramp of our marching feet But ah, it was tenderer now and so sweet That it made our eyes grow wet and blind, And the whole wide-world seem mother-kind, Folding us round with a gentle embrace, And pressing our souls to her soft sweet face.

SONG

Dreams; dreams; ah, the memory blinding us,
Blinding our eyes to the way that we go;
Till the new sorrow come, once more reminding us
Blindly of kind hearts, ours long ago:
Mother-mine, whisper we, yours was the love for me!
Still, though our paths lie lone and apart,
Yours is the true love, shining above for me,
Yours are the kind eyes, hurting my heart.

Dreams; dreams; ah, how shall we sing of them,
Dreams that we loved with our head on her breast:
Dreams; dreams; and the cradle-sweet swing of them;
Ay, for her voice was the sound we loved best:
Can we remember at all or, forgetting it,
Can we recall for a moment the gleam
Of our childhood's delight and the wonder begetting it,
Wonder awakened in dreams of a dream?

And once again, from the heart of the City A murmur of tenderer laughter rose, A sound that was faint as the smile of Pity, And sweet as a swan-song's golden close: And it seemed as if some wonderful Fair Were charming the night of the City of Dreams, For, over the mystical din out there, The clouds were litten with flickering gleams, And a roseate light like the day's first flush Quivered and beat on the towers above, And we heard through the curious crooning hush An elfin song that we used to love. Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn . . . And the soft wind blew it the other way; So all that we heard was—Cow's in the corn: But we never heard anything half so gay!

And ever we seemed to be drawing nearer
That mystical roseate smoke-wreathed glare,
And the curious music grew louder and clearer,
Till mustard-seed said, "We are lucky, you see,
We've arrived at a time of festivity!"
And so to the end of the street we came,
And turned a corner, and—there we were,
In a place that glowed like the dawn of day,
A crowded clamouring City square
Like the cloudy heart of an opal, aflame
With the lights of a great Dream-Fair:
Thousands of children were gathered there,
Thousands of old men, weary and grey,
And the shouts of the showmen filled the air—
This way! This way!

And Sce-Saw; Margery Daw; we heard a rollicking shout,
As the swing-boats hurtled over our heads to the tune of the
roundabout:

And Little Boy Blue, come blow up your horn, we heard the showmen cry.

And Dickory Dock, I'm as good as a clock, we heard the swings reply.

This way, this way to your Heart's Desire;
Come, cast your burdens down;
And the pauper shall mount his throne in the skies,
And the king be rid of his crown:
And souls that were dead shall be fed with fire
From the fount of their ancient pain,
And your lost love come with the light in her eyes
Back to your heart again.

Ah, here be sure she shall never prove
Less kind than her eyes were bright;
This way, this way to your old lost love,
You shall kiss her lips to-night;
This way for the smile of a dead man's face
And the grip of a brother's hand,
This way to your childhood's heart of grace
And your home in Fairy-land.

Dickory Dock, I'm as good as a clock, d'you hear my swivels chime?

To and fro as I come and go, I keep eternal time.

O, little Bo-peep, if you've lost your sheep and don't know where to find 'em,

Leave 'em alone and they'll come home, and carry their tails behind 'em.

And See-Saw; Margery Daw; there came the chorussing shout, As the swing-boats answered the roaring tune of the rollicking roundabout;

Dickory, dickory, dickory, dock, d'you hear my swivels chime?

Swing; swing; you're as good as a king if you keep eternal time.

Then we saw that the tunes of the world were one; And the metre that guided the rhythmic sun Was at one, like the ebb and the flow of the sea, With the tunes that we learned at our mother's knee; The beat of the horse-hoofs that carried us down To see the fine Lady of Banbury Town; And so, by the rhymes that we knew, we could tell Without knowing the others—that all was well.

And then, our brains began to spin; For it seemed as if that mighty din Were no less than the cries of the poets and sages Of all the nations in all the ages: And, if they could only beat out the whole Of their music together, the guerdon and goal Of the world would be reached with one mighty shout. And the dark dread secret of Time be out: And nearer, nearer they seemed to climb, And madder and merrier rose the song, And the swings and the see-saws marked the time; For this was the maddest and merriest throng That ever was met on a holy-day To dance the dust of the world away: And madder and merrier, round and round The whirliggs whirled to the whirling sound,

Till it seemed that the mad song burst its bars And mixed with the song of the whirling stars, The song that the rhythmic Time-Tides tell To seraphs in Heaven and devils in Hell; Ay; Heaven and Hell in accordant chime With the universal rhythm and rhyme Were nearing the secret of Space and Time; The song of that ultimate mystery Which only the mad blind men who see, Led by the laugh of a little child, Can utter; ay, wilder and yet more wild It maddened, till now—full song— it was out! It roared from the starry roundabout—

A child was born in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem,
A child was born in Bethlehem; ah, hear my fairy fable;
For I have seen the King of Kings, no longer thronged with angel
wings,
But crooning like a little babe, and cradled in a stable.

The wise men came to greet him with their gifts of myrrh and frankincense,—

Gold and myrrh and frankincense they brought to make him mirth:

And would you know the way to win to little brother Peterkin, My childhood's heart shall guide you through the glories of the earth.

A child was born in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem, in Bethlehem;
The wise men came to welcome him: a star stood o'er the gable;
And there they saw the King of Kings, no longer thronged with
angel wings,
But crooning like a little babe, and cradled in a stable.

And creeping through the music once again the fairy cry
Came freezing o'er the snowy towers to lead us on to Peterkin
Once more the fairy bugles blew from lands beyond the sky,
And we all groped out together, dazed and blind, we knew not
why;

Out through the City's farther gates we went to look for Peterkin;

Out, out into the dark Unknown, and heard the clamour die Far, far away behind us as we trotted on to Peterkin.

Then once more along the rare
Forest-paths we groped our way:
Here the glow-worm's league-long glare
Turned the Wild Thyme night to day:
There we passed a sort of whale
Sixty feet in length or more,
But we knew it was a snail
Even when we heard it snore.

Often through the glamorous gloom
Almost on the top of us
We beheld a beetle loom
Like a hippopotamus;
Once or twice a spotted toad
Like a mountain wobbled by
With a rolling moon that glowed
Through the skin-fringe of its eye.

Once a caterpillar bowed
Down a leaf of Ygdrasil
Like a sunset-coloured cloud
Sleeping on a quiet hill:
Once we came upon a moth
Fast asleep with outspread wings,
Like a mighty tissued cloth
Woven for the feet of kings.

There above the woods in state
Many a temple dome that glows
Delicately like a great
Rainbow-coloured bubble rose:
Though they were but flowers on earth,
Oh, we dared not enter in;
For in that divine re-birth
Less than awe were more than sin.

Yet their mystic anthems came
Sweetly to our listening ears;
And their burden was the same—
"No more sorrow, no more tears!
Whither Peterkin has gone
You, assuredly, shall go:
When your wanderings are done,
All he knows you, too, shall know!"

So we thought we'd onward roam
Till earth's Smallest Flower appeared,
With a less tremendous dome
Less divinely to be feared:
Then, perchance, if we should dare
Timidly to enter in,
Might some kindly doorkeeper
Give us news of Peterkin.

At last we saw a crimson porch Far away, like a dull red torch Burning in the purple gloom: And a great ocean of perfume Rolled round us as we drew anear. And then we strangely seemed to hear The shadow of a mighty psalm, A sound as if a golden sea Of music swung in utter calm Against the shores of Eternity: And then we saw the mighty dome Of some mysterious Temple tower On high; and knew that we had come, At last, to that sweet House of Grace Which wise men find in every place— The Temple of the Smallest Flower.

And there—alas—our fairy friends
Whispered, "Here our kingdom ends:
You must enter in alone,
But your souls will surely show
Whither Peterkin is gone
And the road that you must go:

We, poor fairies, have no souls! Hark, the warning hare-bell tolls:" So "Good-bye, good-bye," they said, "Dear little seekers-for-the-dead." They vanished; ah, but as they went We heard their voices softly blent In some mysterious fairy song That seemed to make us wise and strong;

For it was like the holy calm That fills the bosomed rose with balm, Or blessings that the twilight breathes Where the honeysuckle wreathes Between young lovers and the sky As on banks of flowers they lie; And with wings of rose and green Laughing fairies pass unseen, Singing their sweet lullaby,— Lulla-lulla-lullaby! Lulla-lulla-lullaby! Ah, good-night, with lullaby!

Only a flower? Those carven walls, Those cornices and coronals, The splendid crimson porch, the thin Strange sounds of singing from within— Through the scented arch we stept, Pushed back the soft petallic door, And down the velvet aisles we crept: Was it a Flower—no more?

For one of the voices that we heard, A child's voice, clear as the voice of a bird, Was it not?—nay, it could not be! And a woman's voice that tenderly Answered him in fond refrain, And pierced our hearts with sweet sweet pain, As if dear Mary-mother hung Above some little child, and sung.

Between the waves of that golden sea The cradle-songs of Eternity; And, while in her deep smile he basked, Answered whatsoe'er he asked.

What is there hid in the heart of a rose,
Mother-mine?

Ah, who knows, who knows, who knows?

A man that died on a lonely hill
May tell you, perhaps, but none other will,
Little child.

What does it take to make a rose,
Mother-mine?
The God that died to make it knows
It takes the world's eternal wars,
It takes the moon and all the stars,
It takes the might of heaven and hell
And the everlasting Love as well,
Little child.

But there, in one great shrine apart
Within the Temple's holiest heart,
We came upon a blinding light,
Suddenly, and a burning throne
Of pinnacled glory, wild and white;
We could not see Who reigned thereor;
For, all at once, as a wood-bird sings,
The aisles were full of great white wings
Row above mystic burning row;
And through the splendour and the glow
We saw four angels, great and sweet,
With outspread wings and folded feet,
Come gliding down from a heaven within
The golden heart of Paradise;
And in their hands, with laughing eyes,

Lay little brother Peterkin.

And all around the Temple of the Smallest of the Flowers
The glory of the angels made a star for little Peterkin;
For all the Kings of Splendour and all the Heavenly Powers
Were gathered there together in the fairy forest bowers
With all their globed and radiant wings to make a star for
Peterkin.

The star that shone upon the East, a star that still is ours,
Whene'er we hang our stockings up, a star of wings for
Peterkin.

Then all, in one great flash, was gone—
A voice cried, "Hush, all's well!"
And we stood dreaming there alone,
In darkness. Who can tell
The mystic quiet that we felt,
As if the woods in worship knelt;
Far off we heard a bell
Tolling strange human folk to prayer
Through fields of sunset-coloured air.

And then a voice, "Why, here they are!"
And—as it seemed—we woke;
The sweet old skies, great star by star
Upon our vision broke;
Field over field of heavenly blue
Rose o'er us; then a voice we knew
Softly and gently spoke—
"See, they are sleeping by the side
Of that dear little one—who died."

PART V THE HAPPY ENDING

We told dear father all our tale
That night before we went to bed,
And at the end his face grew pale,
And he bent over us and said
(Was it not strange?) he, too, was there,
A weary, weary watch to keep
Before the gates of the City of Sleep;
But, ere we came, he did not dare

Even to dream of entering in,
Or even to hope for Peterkin.
He was the poor blind man, he said,
And we—how low he bent his head!
Then he called mother near; and low
He whispered to us—"Prompt me now;
For I forget that song we heard,
But you remember every word."
Then memory came like a breaking morn,
And we breathed it to him—A child was born!
And there he drew us to his breast
And softly murmured all the rest.—

The wise men came to greet him with their gifts of myrrh and frankincense,—

Gold and myrrh and frankincense they brought to make him

mirth;

And would you know the way to win to little brother Peterkin, My childhood's heart shall guide you through the glories of the earth.

Then he looked up and mother knelt
Beside us, oh, her eyes were bright;
Her arms were like a lovely belt
All round us as we said Good-night
To father: he was crying now,
But they were happy tears, somehow;
For there we saw dear mother lay
Her cheek against his cheek and say—
Hush, let me kiss those tears away.

DEDICATION

What can a wanderer bring
To little ones loved like you?
You have songs of your own to sing
That are far more steadfast and true,
Crumbs of pity for birds
That flit o'er your sun-swept lawn,
Songs that are dearer than all our words
With a love that is clear as the dawn.

What should a dreamer devise,
In the depths of his wayward will,
To deepen the gleam of your eyes
Who can dance with the Sun-child still?
Yet you glanced on his lonely way,
You cheered him in dream and deed,
And his heart is o'erflowing, o'erflowing to-day
With a love that—you never will need.

What can a pilgrim teach
To dwellers in fairy-land?
Truth that excels all speech
You murmur and understand!
All he can sing you he brings;
But—one thing more if he may,
One thing more that the King of Kings
Will take from the child on the way.

Yet how can a child of the night
Brighten the light of the sun?
How can he add a delight
To the dances that never are done?
Ah, what if he struggles to turn
Once more to the sweet old skies
With praise and praise, from the fetters that burn,
To the God that brightened your eyes?

Yes; he is weak, he will fail,
Yet, what if, in sorrows apart,
One thing, one should avail,
The cry of a grateful heart;
It has wings: they return through the night
To a sky where the light lives yet,
To the clouds that kneel on his mountain-height
And the path that his feet forget.

What if he struggles and still
Fails and struggles again?
What if his broken will
Whispers the struggle is vain?

Once at least he has risen
Because he remembered your eyes;
Once they have brought to his earthly prison
The passion of Paradise.

Kind little eyes that I love,
Eyes forgetful of mine,
In a dream I am bending above
Your sleep, and you open and shine;
And I know as my own grow blind
With a lonely prayer for your sake,
He will hear—even me—little eyes that were kind,
God bless you, asleep or awake.

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN AND OTHER POEMS

TO GARNETT

FORTY SINGING SEAMEN

"In our lands be Beeres and Lyons of dyvers colours as ye redd, grene, black, and white. And in our land be also unicornes and these Unicornes slee many Lyons. . . . Also there dare no man make a lye in our lande, for if he dyde he sholde incontynent be sleyn."—Mediaval Epistle, of Pope Prester John.

T

Across the seas of Wonderland to Mogadore we plodded,
Forty singing seamen in an old black barque,
And we landed in the twilight where a Polyphemus nodded
With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow through
the dark!

For his eye was growing mellow, Rich and ripe and red and yellow,

As was time, since old Ulysses made him bellow in the dark!

Cho.—Since Ulysses bunged his eye up with a pine-torch in the dark!

TT

Were they mountains in the gloaming or the giant's ugly shoulders

Just beneath the rolling eyeball, with its bleared and vinous glow,

Red and yellow o'er the purple of the pines among the boulders
And the shaggy horror brooding on the sullen slopes below,
Were they pines among the boulders

Or the hair upon his shoulders?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't know.

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we couldn't know.

TIT

But we crossed a plain of poppies, and we came upon a fountain Not of water, but of jewels, like a spray of leaping fire;

And behind it, in an emerald glade, beneath a golden mountain There stood a crystal palace, for a sailor to admire;

For a troop of ghosts came round us,

Which with leaves of bay they crowned us,

Then with grog they well nigh drowned us, to the depth of our desire!

Cho.—And 'twas very friendly of them, as a sailor can admire!

ΤV

There was music all about us, we were growing quite forgetful We were only singing seamen from the dirt of London-town, Though the nectar that we swallowed seemed to vanish half regretful

As if we wasn't good enough to take such vittles down,
When we saw a sudden figure.

Tall and black as any nigger,

Like the devil—only bigger—drawing near us with a frown!

Cho.—Like the devil—but much bigger—and he wore a golden

crown!

\mathbf{V}

And" What's all this?" he growls at us! With dignity we chaunted,

"Forty singing seamen, sir, as won't be put upon!"

"What? Englishmen?" he cries, "Well, if ye don't mind being haunted,

Faith you're welcome to my palace; I'm the famous Prester John!

Will ye walk into my palace? I don't bear 'ee any malice!

One and all ye shall be welcome in the halls of Prester John!"

Cho.—So we walked into the palace and the halls of Prester John!

VI

Now the door was one great diamond and the hall a hollow ruby—

Big as Beachy Head, my lads, nay bigger by a half!

And I sees the mate wi' mouth agape, a-staring like a booby, And the skipper close behind him, with his tongue out like a calf!

Now the way to take it rightly Was to walk along politely

Just as if you didn't notice—so I couldn't help but laugh! Cho.—For they both forgot their manners and the crew was bound to laugh!

VII

But he took us through his palace and, my lads, as I'm a sinner, We walked into an opal like a sunset-coloured cloud—

"My dining-room," he says, and, quick as light we saw a

Spread before us by the fingers of a hidden fairy crowd; And the skipper, swaying gently After dinner, murmurs faintly, "I looks to-wards you, Prester John, you've done us very proud!"

Cho.—And we drank his health with honours, for he done us very proud!

VIII

Then he walks us to his garden where we sees a feathered demon

Very splendid and important on a sort of spicy tree!
"That's the Phœnix," whispers Prester, "which all eddicated seamen

Knows the only one existent, and he's waiting for to flee!

When his hundred years expire

Then he'll set hisself a-fire

And another from his ashes rise most beautiful to see!"
Cho.—With wings of rose and emerald most beautiful to see!

IX

Then he says, "In younder forest there's a little silver river, And whosoever drinks of it, his youth shall never die! The centuries go by, but Prester John endures for ever

With his music in the mountains and his magic on the sky!

While wour hearts are growing colder.

While your world is growing older,

There's a magic in the distance, where the sea-line meets the sky."

Cho.—It shall call to singing seamen till the fount o' song is dry!

X

So we thought we'd up and seek it, but that forest fair defied us.—

First a crimson leopard laughs at us most horrible to see, Then a sea-green lion came and sniffed and licked his chops and eyed us,

While a red and yellow unicorn was dancing round a tree!

We was trying to look thinner,
Which was hard, because our dinner
Must ha' made us very tempting to a cat o' high degree!
Cho.—Must ha' made us very tempting to the whole
menarieree!

XI

So we scuttled from that forest and across the poppy meadows. Where the awful shaggy horror brooded o'er us in the dark! And we pushes out from shore again a-jumping at our shadows,

And pulls away most joyful to the old black barque!

And home again we plodded While the Polyphemus nodded

With his battered moon-eye winking red and yellow through the dark.

Cho.—Oh, the moon above the mountains, red and yellow through the dark!

IIX

Across the seas of Wonderland to London-town we blundered,
Forty singing seamen as was puzzled for to know
If the visions that we saw was caused by—here again we
pondered—

A tipple in a vision forty thousand years ago.

Could the grog we *dreamt* we swallowed

Make us *dream* of all that followed?

We were only simple seamen, so of course we didn't know!

Cho.—We were simple singing seamen, so of course we could

not know!

THE EMPIRE BUILDERS

Who are the Empire-builders? They Whose desperate arrogance demands A self-reflecting power to sway A hundred little selfless lands? Lord God of battles, ere we bow
To these and to their soulless lust,
Let fall Thy thunders on us now
And strike us equal to the dust.

Before the stars in heaven were made
Our great Commander led us forth;
And now the embattled lines are laid
To East, to West, to South, to North;
According as of old He planned
We take our station in the field,
Nor dare to dream we understand
The splendour of the swords we wield.

We know not what the Soul intends
That lives and moves behind our deeds;
We wheel and march to glorious ends
Beyond the common soldier's needs:
And some are raised to high rewards,
And some by regiments are hurled
To die upon the opposing swords
And sleep—forgotten by the world.

And not where navies churn the foam,
Nor called to fields of fierce emprize,
In many a country cottage-home
The Empire-builder lives and dies:
Or through the roaring streets he goes
A lean and weary City slave,
The conqueror of a thousand foes
Who walks, unheeded, to his grave.

Leaders unknown of hopes forlorn
Go past us in the daily mart,
With many a shadowy crown of thorn
And many a kingly broken heart:
Though England's banner overhead
Ever the secret signal flew,
We only see its Cross is red
As children see the skies are blue.

For all are Empire-builders here,
Whose hearts are true to heaven and home
And, year by slow revolving year,
Fulfil the duties as they come;
So simple seems the task, and yet
Many for this are crucified;
Ay, and their brother-men forget
The simple wounds in palm and side.

But he that to his home is true,
Where'er the tides of power may flow,
Has built a kingdom great and new
Which Time nor Fate shall overthrow
These are the Empire-builders, these
Annex where none shall say them nay
Beyond the world's uncharted seas
Realms that can never pass away.

NELSON'S YEAR (1905)

Ţ

"HASTEN the Kingdom, England!"
This year, a hundred years ago,
"Rea world attended, breathless, on the gathering pomp of war,
While England and her deathless dead, with all their mighty
hearts aglow,

is wept onward like the dawn of doom to triumph at Trafalgar;

Then the world was hushed to wonder

As the cannon's dying thunder

Broke out again in muffled peals across the heaving sca,
And home the Victor came at last,
Home, home, with England's flag half-mast,

That never dipped to foe before, on Nelson's Victory.

II

God gave this year to England; And what He gives He takes again;

He gives us life, He gives us death: our victories have wings;
He gives us love and in its heart He hides the whole world's
heart of pain:

We gain by loss: impartially the eternal balance swings!

Ay; in the fire we cherish

Our thoughts and dreams may perish;

Yet shall it burn for England's sake triumphant as of old!

What sacrifice could gain for her Our own shall still maintain for her,

And hold the gates of Freedom wide that take no keys of gold.

TIT

God gave this year to England;

Her eyes are far too bright for tears

Of sorrow; by her silent dead she kneels, too proud for pride;
Their blood, their love, have bought her right to claim the
new imperial years

In England's name for Freedom, in whose love her children

died:

In whose love, though hope may dwindle, Love and brotherhood shall kindle

Between the striving nations as a choral song takes fire,

Till new hope, new faith, new wonder

Cleave the clouds of doubt asunder,

And speed the union of mankind in one divine desire.

IV

Hasten the Kingdom, England;

This year across the listening world

There came a sound of mingled tears where victory and defeat Clasped hands; and Peace— among the dead— stood wistfully, with white wings furled.

Knowing the strife was idle; for the night and morning meet,

Yet there is no disunion
In heaven's divine communion

As through the gates of twilight the harmonious morning pours;

Ah, God speed that grander morrow When the world's divinest sorrow

Shall show how Love stands knocking at the world's unopened doors.

V

Hasten the Kingdom, England; Look up across the narrow seas,

Across the great white nations to thy dark imperial throne Where now three hundred million souls attend on thine august decrees;

Ah, bow thine head in humbleness, the Kingdom is thine own:

Not for the pride or power

God gave thee this in dower:

But, now the West and East have met and wept their mortal loss,

Now that their tears have spoken
And the long dumb spell is broken,
Is it nothing that thy banner bears the red eternal cross?

VI

Ay! Lift the flag of England;
And lo, that Eastern cross is there,

Veiled with a hundred meanings as our English eyes are veiled; Yet to the grander dawn we move oblivious of the sign we bear,

Oblivious of the heights we climb until the last be scaled;

Then with all the earth before us And the great cross floating o'er us

We shall break the sword we forged of old, so weak we were and blind:

While the inviolate heaven discloses

England's Rose of all the roses

Dawning wide and ever wider o'er the kingdom of mankind.

VII

Hasten the Kingdom, England; For then all nations shall be one:

One as the ordered stars are one that sing upon their way,
One with the rhythmic glories of the swinging sea and
the rolling sun.

One with the flow of life and death, the tides of night and day; One with all dreams of beauty,

One with all laws of duty;

One with the weak and helpless while the one sky burns above;
Till eyes by tears made glorious
Look up at last victorious.

And lips that starved break open in one song of life and love.

VIII

Hasten the Kingdom, England;
And when the Spring returns again
Rekindle in our English hearts the universal Spring,
That we may wait in faith upon the former and the latter
rain.

Till all waste places burgeon and the wildernesses sing;

Pour the glory of thy pity

Through the dark and troubled city;

Pour the splendour of thy beauty over wood and meadow fair:

May the God of battles guide thee And the Christ-child walk beside thee

With a word of peace for England in the dawn of Nelson's Year.

IN TIME OF WAR

Ι

To-NIGHT o'er Bagshot heath the purple heather Rolls like dumb thunder to the splendid West; And mighty ragged clouds are massed together Above the scarred old common's broken breast; And there are hints of blood between the boulders, Red glints of fiercer blossom, bright and bold; And round the shaggy mounds and sullen shoulders The gorse repays the sun with savage gold.

And now, as in the West the light grows holy,
And all the hollows of the heath grow dim,
Far off, a sulky rumble rolls up slowly
Where guns at practice growl their evening hymn.

And here and there in bare clean yellow spaces
The print of horse-hoofs like an answering cry
Strikes strangely on the sense from lonely places
Where there is nought but empty heath and sky.

The print of warlike hoofs, where now no figure
Of horse or man along the sky's red rim
Breaks on the low horizon's rough black rigour
To make the gorgeous waste less wild and grim;

Strangely the hoof-prints strike, a Crusoe's wonder,
Framed with sharp furze amongst the footless fells,
A menace and a mystery, rapt asunder,
As if the whole wide world contained nought else,—

Nought but the grand despair of desolation Between us and that wild, how far, how near, Where, clothed with thunder, nation grapples nation, And Slaughter grips the clay-cold hand of Fear.

II

And far above the purple heath the sunset stars awaken,
And ghostly hosts of cloud across the West begin to stream,
And all the low soft winds with muffled cannonades are
shaken,

And all the blood-red blossom draws aloof into a dream;

A dream—no more—and round the dream the clouds are curled together;

A dream of two great stormy hosts embattled in the sky;

For there against the low red heavens each sombre ridge of heather

Up-heaves a hedge of bayonets around a battle-cry;

Melts in the distant battlefield or brings the dream so near it That, almost, as the rifted clouds around them swim and reel,

A thousand grey-lipped faces flash—ah, hark, the heart can hear it—

The sharp command that lifts as one the levelled lines of steel.

And through the purple thunders there are silent shadows creeping

With murderous gleams of light, and then—a mighty leaping roar

Where foe and foe are met; and then—a long low sound of weeping

As Death laughs out from sea to sea, another fight is o'er.

Another fight—but ah, how much is over? Night descending Draws o'er the scene her ghastly moon-shot veil with piteous hands:

But all around the bivouac-glare the shadowy pickets wending See sights, hear sounds that only war's own madness understands.

No circle of the accursed dead where dreaming Dante wandered,

No city of death's eternal dole could match this mortal world

Where men, before the living soul and quivering flesh are sundered,

Through all the bestial shapes of pain to one wide grave are hurled.

But in the midst for those who dare beyond the fringe to enter Be sure one kingly figure lies with pale and blood-soiled face,

And round his brows a ragged crown of thorns; and in the

Of those pale folded hands and feet the sigil of his grace.

See, how the pale limbs, marred and searred in love's lost battle, languish;

See how the splendid passion still smiles quietly from his eyes:

Come, come and see a king indeed, who triumphs in his anguish,

Who conquers here in utter loss beneath the eternal skies.

For unto lips so deadly calm what answer shall be given?

Oh pale, pale king so deadly still beneath the unshaken stars,
Who shall deny thy kingdom here, though heaven and earth
were riven,

With the last roar of onset in the world's intestine wars?

The laugh is Death's; he laughs as erst o'er hours that England cherished,

"Count up, count up the stricken homes that wail the firstborn son.

Count by your starved and fatherless the tale of what hath perished;

Then gather with your foes and ask if you-or I-have won."

III

The world rolls on; and love and peace are mated:
Still on the breast of England, like a star,
The blood-red lonely heath blows, consecrated,
A brooding practice-ground for blood-red war.

Yet is there nothing out of tune with Nature
There, where the skylark showers his earliest song,
Where sun and wind have moulded every feature,
And one world-music bears each note along.

There many a brown-winged kestrel swoops or hovers
In poised and patient quest of his own prey;
And there are fern-clad glens where happy lovers
May kiss the murmuring summer noon away.

There, as the primal earth was—all is glorious
Perfect and wise and wonderful in view
Of that great heaven through which we rise victorious
O'er all that strife and change and death can do.

No nation yet has risen o'er earth's first nature; Though love illumed each individual mind, Like some half-blind, half-formed primeval creature The State still crawled a thousand years behind.

Still on the standards of the great World-Powers Lion and bear and eagle sullenly brood, Whether the slow folds flap o'er halcyon hours Or stream tempestuously o'er fields of blood.

By war's red evolution we have risen
Far, since fierce Erda chose her conquering few,
And out of Death's red gates and Time's grey prison
They burst, elect from battle, tried and true.

But now Death mocks at youth and love and glory, Chivalry slinks behind his loaded mines, With meaner murderous lips War tells her story, And round her cunning brows no laurel shines.

And here to us the eternal charge is given
To rise and make our low world touch God's high:
To hasten God's own kingdom, Man's own heaven,
And teach Love's grander army how to die.

No kingdom then, no long-continuing city
Shall e'er again be stablished by the sword;
No blood-bought throne defy the powers of pity,
No despot's crown outweigh one helot's word.

Imperial England, breathe thy marching orders:
The great host waits; the end, the end is close,
When earth shall know thy peace in all her borders,
And all her deserts blossom with thy Rose.

Princedoms and peoples rise and flash and perish
As the dew passes from the flowering thorn;
Yet the one Kingdom that our dreams still cherish
Lives in a light that blinds the world's red morn.

Hasten the Kingdom, England, the days darken; We would not have thee slacken watch or ward, Nor doff thine armour till the whole world hearken, Nor till Time bid thee lay aside the sword.

Hasten the Kingdom; hamlet, heath, and city, We are all at war, one bleeding bulk of pain; Little we know; but one thing—by God's pity—We know, and know all else on earth is vain.

We know not yet how much we dare, how little; We dare not dream of peace; yet, as at need, England, God help thee, let no jot or tittle Of Love's last law go past thee without heed.

Who saves his life shall lose it! The great ages
Bear witness—Rome and Babylon and Tyre
Cry from the dust-stopped lips of all their sages,—
There is no hope if man can climb no higher.

England, by God's grace set apart to ponder
A little while from battle, ah, take heed,
Keep watch, keep watch, beside thy sleeping thunder;
Call down Christ's pity while those others bleed;

Waken the God within thee, while the sorrow Of battle surges round a distant shore, While Time is thine, lest on some deadly morrow The moving finger write—but thine no more.

Little we know—but though the advancing æons
Win every painful step by blood and fire,
Though tortured mouths must chant the world's great pæans,
And martyred souls proclaim the world's desire;

Though war be nature's engine of rejection. Soon, soon, across her universal verge. The soul of man in sacred insurrection. Shall into God's diviner light emerge.

Hasten the Kingdom, England, queen and mother; Little we know of all Time's works and ways; Yet this, this, this is sure: we need none other Knowledge or wisdom, hope or aim or praise,

But to keep this one stormy banner flying
In this one faith that none shall e'er disprove,
Then drive the embattled world before thee, crying,
There is one Emperor, whose name is Love.

ODE FOR THE SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY OF SWINBURNE

Ι

He needs no crown of ours, whose golden heart
Poured out its wealth so freely in pure praise
Of others: him the imperishable bays
Crown, and on Sunium's height he sits apart:
He hears immortal greetings this great morn:
Fain would we bring, we also, all we may,
Some wayside flower of transitory bloom,
Frail tribute, only born
To greet the gladness of this April day
Then waste on death's dark wind its faint perfume.

II

Here on this April day the whole sweet Spring
Speaks thro' his music only, or seems to speak.
And we that hear, with hearts uplift and weak,
What can we more than claim him for our king?
Here on this April day (and many a time
Shall April come and find him singing still)
He is one with the world's great heart beyond the years,
One with the pulsing rhyme
Of tides that work some heavenly rhythmic will
And hold the secret of all human tears.

III

For he, the last of that immortal race
Whose music, like a robe of living light
Re-clothed each new-born age and made it bright
As with the glory of Love's transfiguring face,
Reddened earth's roses, kindled the deep blue
Of England's radiant, ever-singing sea,
Recalled the white Thalassian from the foam,
Woke the dim stars anew
And triumphed in the triumph of Liberty,
We claim him; but he hath not here his home.

Not here: round him to-day the clouds divide:

IV

We know what faces thro' that rose-flushed air
Now bend above him: Shelley's face is there,
And Hugo's, lit with more than kingly pride.
Replenished there with splendour, the blind eyes
Of Milton bend from heaven to meet his own,
Sappho is there, crowned with those queenlier flowers
Whose graft outgrew our skies,
His gift: Shakespeare leans earthward from his throne
With hands outstretched. He needs no crown of ours.

IN CLOAK OF GREY

I

Love's a pilgrim, cloaked in grey,
And his feet are pierced and bleeding:
Have ye seen him pass this way
Sorrowfully pleading?
Ye that weep the world away,
Have ye seen King Love to-day?—

II

Yea, we saw him; but he came Poppy-crowned and white of limb! Song had touched his lips with flame, And his eyes were drowsed and dim; And we kissed the hours away Till night grew rosier than the day.—

III

Hath he left you?—Yea, he left us A little while ago,
Of his laughter quite bereft us
And his limbs of snow;
We know not why he went away
Who ruled our revels yesterday.—

IV

Because ye did not understand
Love cometh from afar,
A pilgrim out of Holy Land
Guided by a star:
Last night he came in cloak of grey,
Begging. Ye knew him not: he went his way.

A RIDE FOR THE QUEEN

Queen of queens, oh lady mine,
You who say you love me,
Here's a cup of crimson wine
To the stars above me;
Here's a cup of blood and gall
For a soldier's quaffing!
What's the prize to crown it all?
Death? I'll take it laughing!
I ride for the Queen to-night!

Though I find no knightly fee
Waiting on my lealty,
High upon the gallows-tree
Faithful to my fealty,
What had I but love and youth,
Hope and fame in season?
She has proved that more than truth
Glorifies her treason!

Would that other do as much?
Ah, but if in sorrow
Some forgotten look or touch
Pierce her heart to-morrow
She might love me yet, I think;
So her lie befriends me,
Though I know there's darker drink
Down the road she sends me.

Ay, one more great chance is mine (Can I faint or falter?)
She shall pour my blood like wine,
Make my heart her altar,
Burn it to the dust! For, there,
What if o'er the embers
She should stoop and—I should hear—
"Hush! Thy love remembers!"

One more chance for every word
Whispered to betray me,
While she buckled on my sword
Smiling to allay me;
One more chance; ah, let me not
Mar her perfect pleasure;
Love shall pay me, jot by jot,
Measure for her measure.

Faith shall think I never knew,
I will be so fervent!
Doubt shall dream I dreamed her true
As her war-worn servant!
Whoso flouts her spotless name
(Love, I wear thy token!)
He shall face one sword of flame
Ere the lie be spoken!

All the world's a-foam with may,
(Fragrant as her bosom!)
Could I find a sweeter way
Through the year's young blossom,
Where her warm red mouth on mine
Woke my soul's desire? . . .
Hey! The cup of crimson wine,
Blood and gall and fire!

Castle Doom or Gates of Death?
(Smile again for pity!)
"Boot and horse," my lady saith,
"Spur against the City,
Bear this message!" God and she
Still forget the guerdon;
Nay, the rope is on the tree!
That shall bear the burden!
I ride for the Queen to-night!

SONG 191

SONG

I

When that I loved a maiden
My heaven was in her eyes,
And when they bent above me
I knew no deeper skies;
But when her heart forsook me
My spirit broke its bars,
For grief beyond the sunset
And love beyond the stars.

H

When that I loved a maiden
She seemed the world to me:
Now is my soul the universe,
My dreams the sky and sea:
There is no heaven above me,
No glory binds or bars
My grief beyond the sunset,
My love beyond the stars.

III

When that I loved a maiden
I worshipped where she trod;
But, when she clove my heart, the eleft
Set free the imprisoned god:
Then was I king of all the world,
My soul had burst its bars,
For grief beyond the sunset
And love beyond the stars.

THE HIGHWAYMAN

PART ONE

T

THE wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees, The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas, The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor, And the highwayman came riding—

Riding-riding-

The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

П

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,

A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin; They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh! And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,

His pistol butts a-twinkle.

His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark innyard,

And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;

He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Bess, the landlord's daughter,

Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and peaked; His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay, But he loved the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's red-lipped daughter,
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

V

"One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night, But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light:

Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day.

Then look for me by moonlight,

Watch for me by moonlight,

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way."

VI

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,

But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a brand

As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast; And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,

(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)

Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the West.

PART TWO

Ι

He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at noon; And out o' the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the moon, When the road was a gipsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor, A red-coat troop came marching—

Marching-marching-

King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

ΙI

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale instead.

But they gagged his daugnter and bound her to the foot of her narrow bed;

Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their side! There was death at every window;

And hell at one dark window;

For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that he would ride.

III

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest:

They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast!

"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her.

She heard the dead man say-

Look for me by moonlight;

Watch for me by moonlight;

I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!

IV

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!

She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!

They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years,

Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,

Cold, on the stroke of midnight,

The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

V

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for the rest!

Up, she stood up to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,

She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again; For the road lay bare in the moonlight;

Blank and bare in the moonlight;

And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed to her love's refrain.

VI

The thot; the thot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs ringing clear;

Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?

Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,

The highwayman came riding,

Riding, riding!

The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still!

VII

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! Tlot-tlot, in the echoing night! Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light! Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep

breath,

Then her finger moved in the moonlight,

Her musket shattered the moonlight,

Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.

VIII

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know who stood Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own red blood!

Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear

How Bess, the landlord's daughter,

The landlord's black-eyed daughter,

Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

IX

Back, he spurred like a madman, shricking a curse to the sky, With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high!

Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his

When they shot him down on the highway,

Down like a dog on the highway,

And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch of lace at his throat.

X

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees.

When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas, When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor, A highwayman comes riding—

Riding-riding-

A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

XI

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard; He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred;

He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

THE HAUNTED PALACE

Come to the haunted palace of my dreams,
My crumbling palace by the eternal sea,
Which, like a childless mother, still must croon
Her ancient sorrows to the cold white moon,
Or, ebbing tremulously,

With one pale arm, where the long foam-fringe gleams, Will gather her rustling garments, for a space Of muffled weeping, round her dim white face.

A princess dwelt here once: long, long ago
This tower rose in the sunset like a prayer;
And, through the witchery of that casement, rolled
In one soft cataract of faëry gold

Her wonder-woven hair; Her face leaned out and took the sacred glow Of evening, like the star that listened, high Above the gold clouds of the western sky. Was there no prince behind her in the gloom,
No crimson shadow of his rich array?
Her face leaned down to me: I saw the tears
Bleed through her eyes with the slow pain of years,
And her mouth yearned to say—
"Friend, is there any message, from the tomb
Where love lies buried?" But she only said—

Where love lies buried?" But she only said—"Oh, friend, canst thou not save me from my dead?

"Canst thou not minister to a soul in pain?
Or hast thou then no comfortable word?
Is there no faith in thee wherewith to atone
For his unfaith who left me here alone,
Heart-siek with hope deferred;
Oh, since my love will never come again,
Bring'st thou no respite through the desolate years,
Respite from these most unavailing tears?"

Then saw I, and mine own tears made response,
Her woman's heart come breaking through her eyes;
And, as I stood beneath the tower's grey wall,
She let the soft waves of her deep hair fall
Like flowers from Paradise
Over my fevered face: then all at once
Pity was passion; and like a sea of bliss
Those waves rolled o'er me drowning for her kiss.

Seven years we dwelt together in that tower, Seven years in that old palace by the sea, And sitting at that easement, side by side, She told me all her pain: how love had died Now for all else but me;

Yet how she had loved that other: like a flower Her red lips parted and with low sweet moan She pressed their tender suffering on mine own. And always with vague eyes she gazed afar,
Out through the easement o'er the changing tide;
And slowly was my heart's hope brought to nought
That some day I should win each wandering thought
And make her my soul's bride:

Still, still she gazed across the cold sea-bar;
Ay; with her hand in mine, still, still and pale,
Waited and watched for the unreturning sail.

And I, too, watched and waited as the years
Rolled on; and slowly was I brought to feel
How on my lips she met her lover's kiss,
How my heart's pulse begat an alien bliss;
And cold and hard as steel
For me those eyes were, though their tender tears
Were salt upon my cheek; and then one night
I saw a sail come through the pale moonlight.

And like an alien ghost I stole away,
And like a breathing lover he returned;
And in the woods I dwelt, or sometimes crept
Out in the grey dawn while the lovers slept
And the great sca-tides yearned
Against the iron shores; and faint and grey
The tower and the shut casement rose above:
And on the earth I sobbed out all my love.

At last, one royal rose-hung night in June,
When the warm air like purple Hippocrene
Brimmed the dim valley and sparkled into stars,
I saw them cross the foam-lit sandy bars
And dark pools, glimmering green,
To bathe beneath the honey-coloured moon:
I saw them swim out from that summer shore,
Kissed by the sea, but they returned no more.

* * * * * *

And into the dark palace, like a dream
Remembered after long oblivious years,
Through the strange open doors I crept and saw
As some poor pagan might, with reverent awe,
And deep adoring tears.

The moonlight through that painted window stream Over the soft wave of their vacant bed; There sank I on my knees and bowed my head,

For as a father by a cradle bows,
Remembering two dead children of his own,
I knelt; and by the cry of the great deep
Their love seemed like a murmuring in their sleep,
A little fevered moan.

A little tossing of childish arms that shows
How dreams go by! "If I were God," I wept,
"I would have pity on children while they slept."

The days, the months, the years drift over me;
This is my habitation till I die:
Nothing is changed; they left that open book
Beside the window. Did he sit and look
Up at her face as I
Looked while she read it, and the enchanted sea
With rich eternities of love unknown

Fulfilled the low sweet music of her tone?

So did he listen, looking in her face?

And did she ever pause, remembering so
The heart that bore the whole weight of her pain
Until her own heart's love returned again?

In the still evening glow
I sit and listen in this quiet place,
And only hear—like notes of phantom birds—
Their perished kisses and little broken words.

Come to the haunted values of my dreams, My crumbling values by the eternal sea. Which like a childless mother, still must croon Her ancient sorrows to the cold white moon.

On, ebbing tremulously.

With one pale arm, where the long foam-fringe gleams, Will pather her rustling parments, for a space Of muffled weeping, round her dim white face.

THE SCULPTOR

This is my statue: cold and white
It stands and takes the morning light!
The world may flout my hopes and fears.
Yet was my life's work washed with tears
Of blood when this poor hand last night
Finished the pain of years.

Speak for me, patient lips of stone, Blind eyes my lips have rested on So often when the o'er-weary brain Would grope to human love again, And found this grave cold mask alone And the tears fell like rain.

Ay; is this all? Is this the brow
I fondled, never wondering how
It lived—the face of pain and bliss
That through the marble met my kiss?
Oh, though the whole world praise it now,
Let no man dream it is!

They blame; they cannot blame aright Who never knew what infinite
Deep loss must shame me most of all!
They praise; like earth their praises fall into a tomb. The hour of light
Is flown beyond recall.

Yet have I seen, yet have I known, And oh, not tombed in cold white stone The dream I lose on earth below; And I shall come with face aglow And find and claim it for my own Before God's throne, I know.

SUMMER

(AN ODE)

Now like a pageant of the Golden Year
In rich memorial pomp the hours go by,
With rose-embroidered flags unfurled
And tasselled bugles calling through the world
Wake, for your hope draws near!
Wake, for in each soft porch of azure sky,
Seen through each arch of pale green leaves, the Gate
Of Eden swings apart for Summer's royal state.

Ah, when the Spirit of the moving scene
Has entered in, the splendour will be spent!
The flutes will cease, the gates will close;
Only the scattered crimson of the rose,
The wild wood's hapless queen,
Dis-kingdomed, will declare the way he went;
And, in a little while, her court will go,
Pass like a cloud and leave no trace on earth below.

Tell us no more of Autumn, the slow gold
Of fruitage ripening in a world's decay.
The falling leaves, the moist rich breath
Of woods that swoon and crumble into death
Over the gorgeous mould:
Give us the flash and scent of keen-edged may
Where wastes that bear no harvest yield their bloom.
Rude crofts of flowering nettle, bents of yellow broom.

The very reeds and sedges of the fen
Open their hearts and blossom to the sky;
The wild thyme on the mountain's knees
Unrolls its purple market to the becs;
Unharvested of men

The Traveller's Joy can only smile and die.

Joy, joy alone the throbbing whitethroats bring,

Joy to themselves and heaven! They were but born to sing!

And see, between the northern-scented pines,
The whole sweet summer sharpens to a glow!
See, as the well-spring plashes cool
Over a shadowy green fern-fretted pool
The mystic sunbeam shines
For one mad moment on a breast of snow
A warm white shoulder and a glowing arm
Up-flung, where some swift Undine sinks in shy alarm.

And if she were not all a dream, and lent
Life for a little to your own desire,
Oh, lover in the hawthorn lane,
Dream not you hold her, or you dream in vain!
The violet, spray-besprent
When from that plunge the rainbows flashed like fire,
Will scarce more swiftly lose its happy dew
Than eyes which Undine haunts will cease to shine on you.

A happy spendthrift of uncounted gold,
Swinging upon a blossomed briar
With soft throat lifted in a wild desire
To make the world his may.
Ever the pageant through the gates is rolled
Further away; in vain the rich notes throng
Flooding the mellow noon with wave on wave of song.

What though the throstle pour his heart away,

The feathery meadows like a lilac sea,
Knee-deep, with honeyed clover, red and white,
Roll billowing: the crisp clouds pass
Trailing their soft blue shadows o'er the grass;
The skylark, mad with glee,

Quivers, up, up, to lose himself in light;
And, through the forest, like a fairy dream
Through some dark mind, the ferns in branching beauty
stream.

Summer, fair god that hast so little heed
Of these that serve thee but to die,
Mere trappings of thy tragic pageantry!
Show us the end, the end!
We too, with human hearts that break and bleed,
March to the night that rounds their fleeting hour,
And feel we, too, perchance but serve some loftier Power.

O that our hearts might pass away with thee,
Burning and pierced and full of thy sweet pain,
Burst through the gates with thy swift soul,
Hunt thy most white perfection to the goal,
Nor wait, once more to see
Thy chaliced lilies rotting in the rain,
Thy ragged yellowing banners idly hung
In woods that have forgotten all the songs we sung!

Enough of joy! A little respite lend,

Peace! Like a pageant of the Golden Year
In rich memorial pomp the hours go by,
With rose-embroidered flags unfurled
And tasselled bugles calling through the world
Wake, for your hope draws near!
Wake, for in each soft porch of azure sky,
Seen through each arch of pale green leaves, the Gate
Of Eden swings apart for Summer's royal state.

Not wait! Forgive, forgive that feeble cry
Of blinded passion all unworthy thee!
For here the spirit of man may claim
A loftier vision and a nobler aim
Than e'er was born to die:
Man only, of earth, throned on Eternity,
From his own sure abiding-place can mark
How earth's great golden dreams go past into the dark.

AT DAWN

O HESPER-PHOSPHOR, far away
Shining, the first, the last white star,
Hear'st thou the strange, the ghostly cry,
That moan of an ancient agony
From purple forest to golden sky
Shivering over the breathless bay?
It is not the wind that wakes with the day;
For see, the gulls that wheel and call.

It is not the wind that wakes with the day;
For see, the gulls that wheel and call,
Beyond the tumbling white-topped bar,
Catching the sun-dawn on their wings,

Like snow-flakes or like rose-leaves fall, Flutter and fall in airy rings;

And drift, like lilies ruffling into blossom
Upon some golden lake's unwrinkled bosom.

Are not the forest's deep-lashed fringes wet With tears? Is not the voice of all regret

Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?
She too, she too, has loved and lost; and we—
We that remember our lost Arcady,
Have we not known, we too,
The primal greenwood's arch of blue,
The radiant clouds at sun-rise curled
Around the brows of the golden world;
The marble temples, washed with dew,
To which with rosy limbs aflame
The violet-eyed Thalassian came,
Came, pitiless, only to display
How soon the youthful splendour dies away;

Came, only to depart
Laughing across the grey-grown bitter sea;
For each man's life is earth's epitome,
And though the years bring more than aught they take,
Yet might his heart and hers well break
Remembering how one prayer must still be vain.

How one fair hope is dead,
One passion quenched, one glory fled
With those first loves that never come again.

How many years, how many generations, Have heard that sigh in the dawn,

When the dark earth yearns to the unforgotten nations And the old loves withdrawn,

Old loves, old lovers, wonderful and unnumbered

As waves on the wine-dark sea,

'Neath the tall white towers of Troy and the temples that slumbered

In Thessaly?

From the beautiful palaces, from the miraculous portals, The swift white feet are flown!

They were taintless of dust, the proud, the peerless Immortals
As they sped to their loftier throne!

Perchance they are there, earth dreams, on the shores of Hesper,

Her rosy-bosomed Hours,

Listening the wild fresh forest's enchanted whisper, Crowned with its new strange flowers;

Listening the great new ocean's triumphant thunder
On the stainless unknown shore.

While that perilous queen of the world's delight and wonder Comes white from the foam once more.

When the mists divide with the dawn o'er those glittering waters,

Do they gaze over unoared seas-

Naiad and nymph and the woodland's rose-erowned daughters

And the Oceanides?

Do they sing together, perchance, in that diamond splendour, That world of dawn and dew,

With eyelids twitching to tears and with eyes grown tender. The sweet old songs they knew,

The songs of Greece? Ah, with harp-strings mute do they falter

As the earth like a small star pales?

When the heroes launch their ship by the smoking altar Does a memory lure their sails?

Far, far away, do their hearts resume the story
That never on earth was told,
When all those urgent oars on the waste of glory
Cast up its gold?

Are not the forest fringes wet
With tears? Is not the voice of all regret
Breaking out of the dark earth's heart?
She too, she too, has loved and lost; and though
She turned last night in disdain

Away from the sunset-embers, From her soul she can never depart; She can never depart from her pain. Vainly she strives to forget; Beautiful in her woe,

She awakes in the dawn and remembers.

THE SWIMMER'S RACE

T

Between the clover and the trembling sea
They stand upon the golden-shadowed shore
In naked boyish beauty, a strenuous three,
Hearing the breakers' deep Olympic roar;
Three young athletes poised on a forward limb,
Mirrored like marble in the smooth wet sand,
Three statues moulded by Praxiteles:
The blue horizon rim
Recedes, recedes upon a lovelier land,

II

And England melts into the skies of Greece.

The dome of heaven is like one drop of dew,
Quivering and clear and cloudless but for one
Crisp bouldered Alpine range that blinds the blue
With snowy gorges glittering to the sun:
Forward the runners lean, with outstretched hand
Waiting the word—ah, how the light relieves
The silken rippling muscles as they start
Spurning the yellow sand,
Then skimming lightlier till the goal receives

Then skimming lightlier till the goal receives
The winner, head thrown back and lips apart.

Ш

Now at the sea-marge on the sand they lie
At rest for a moment, panting as they breathe,
And gazing upward at the unbounded sky
While the sand nestles round them from beneath;
And in their hands they gather up the gold
And through their fingers let it lazily stream
Over them, dusking all their limbs' fair white,
Blotting their shape and mould,
Till, mixed into the distant gazer's dream
Of earth and heaven, they seem to sink from sight,

IV

But one, in seeming petulance, oppressed
With heat has east his brown young body free:
With arms behind his head and heaving breast
He lies and gazes at the cool bright sea;
So young Leander might when in the noon
He panted for the starry eyes of eve
And whispered o'er the waste of wandering waves,
"Hero, bid night come soon!"
Nor knew the nymphs were waiting to receive
And kiss his pale limbs in their cold sea-caves.

V

Now to their feet they leap and, with a shout,
Plunge through the glittering breakers without fear,
Breast the green-arching billows, and still out,
As if each dreamed the arms of Hero near;
Now like three sunbeams on an emerald crest,
Now like three foam-flakes melting out of sight,
They are blent with all the glory of all the sea;
One with the golden West;
Merged in a myriad waves of mystic light
As life is lost in immortality.

THE VENUS OF MILO

Τ

Backward she leans, as when the rose unblown
Slides white from its warm sheath some morn in May!
Under the sloping waist, aslant, her zone
Clings as it slips in tender disarray;
One knee, out-thrust a little, keeps it so
Lingering ere it fall; her lovely face
Gazes as o'er her own Eternity!
Those armless radiant shoulders, long ago
Perchance held arms out wide with yearning grace

TT

For Adon by the blue Sicilian sea.

No; thou eternal fount of these poor gleams,
Bright axle-star of the wheeling temporal skies,
Daughter of blood and foam and deathless dreams,
Mother of flying Love that never dies,
To thee, the topmost and consummate flower,
The last harmonic height, our dull desires
And our tired souls in dreary discord climb;
The flesh forgets its pale and wandering fires;
We gaze through heaven as from an ivory tower
Shining upon the last dark shores of Time.

III

White culmination of the dreams of earth,
Thy splendour beacons to a loftier goal,
Where, slipping earthward from the great new birth,
The shadowy senses leave the essential soul!
Oh, naked loveliness, not yet revealed,
A moment hence that falling robe will show
No prophecy like this, this great new dawn,
The bare bright breasts, each like a soft white shield,
And the firm body like a slope of snow
Out of the slipping dream-stuff half withdrawn.

NIOBE 209

THE NET OF VULCAN

From peaks that clove the heavens asunder
The hunchback god with sooty claws
Loomed o'er the night, a cloud of thunder,
And hurled the net of mortal laws;
It flew, and all the world grew dimmer;
Its blackness blotted out the stars,
Then fell across the rosy glimmer
That told where Venus couched with Mars.

And, when the steeds that draw the morning Spurned from their Orient hooves the spray, All vainly soared the lavrock, warning Those tangled lovers of the day:
Still with those twin white waves in blossom, Against the warrior's rock-broad breast,
The netted light of the foam-born bosom Breathed like a sea at rest.

And light was all that followed after,
Light the derision of the sky,
Light the divine Olympian laughter
Of kindlier gods in days gone by:
Low to her lover whispered Venus,
"The shameless net be praised for this—
When night herself no more could screen us
It snared us one more hour of bliss."

NIOBE

How like the sky she bends above her child,
One with the great horizon of her pain!
No sob from our low seas where woe runs wild,
No weeping cloud, no momentary rain,
Can mar the heaven-high visage of her grief,
That frozen anguish, proud, majestic, dumb.
She stoops in pity above the labouring earth,
Knowing how fond, how brief
Is all its hope, past, present, and to come,
She stoops in pity, and yearns to assuage its dearth.

210 NIOBE

Through that fair face the whole dark universe
Speaks, as a thorn-tree speaks thro' one white flower;
And all those wrenched Promethean souls that curse
The gods, but cannot die before their hour,
Find utterance in her beauty. That fair head
Bows over all earth's graves. It was her cry
Men heard in Rama when the twisted ways
With children's blood ran red!
Her silence utters all the sea would sigh;
And, in her face, the whole earth's anguish prays.

It is the pity, the pity of human love
That strains her face, upturned to meet the doom,
And her deep bosom, like a snow-white dove
Frozen upon its nest, ne'er to resume
Its happy breathing o'er the golden brace
Whose fostering was her death. Death, death alone
Can break the anguished horror of that spell!
The sorrow on her face
Is sealed: the living flesh is turned to stone;
She knows all, all, that Life and Time can tell.

Ah, yet, her woman's love, so vast, so tender;
Her woman's body, hurt by every dart;
Braving the thunder, still, still hide the slender
Soft frightened child beneath her mighty heart.
She is all one mute immortal cry, one brief
Infinite pang of such victorious pain
That she transcends the heavens and bows them down!
The majesty of grief
Is hers, and her dominion must remain

Eternal. God nor man usurps that crown.

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Ι

Height over height, the purple pine-woods clung to the rich Areadian mountains,

Holy-sweet as a sea of incense, under the low dark crimson skies:

Glad were the glens where Eurydice bathed, in the beauty of dawn, at the haunted fountains

Deep in the blue hyacinthine hollows, whence all the rivers of Aready rise.

Long ago, ah, white as the Huntress, cold and sweet as the petals that crowned her,

Fair and fleet as the fawn that shakes the dew from the fern at break of day,

Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair that swept in a sun-bright glory around her,

Down to the valley her light feet stole, ah, soft as the budding of flowers in May.

Down to the valley she came, for far and far below in the dreaming meadows

Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his love by her golden name;

So she arose from her home in the hills, and down through the blossoms that danced with their shadows,

Out of the blue of the dreaming distance, down to the heart of her lover she came.

.

Red were the lips that hovered above her lips in the flowery haze of the June-day:

Red as a rose through the perfumed mist of passion that reeled before her eyes;

Strong the smooth young sunburnt arms that folded her heart to his heart in the noon-day,

Strong and supple with throbbing sunshine under the blinding southern skies.

Ah, the kisses, the little murmurs, mad with pain for their phantom fleetness,

Mad with pain for the passing of love that lives, they dreamed—as we dream—for an hour!

Ah, the sudden tempest of passion, mad with pain for its over-sweetness,

As petal by petal and pang by pang their love broke out into perfect flower.

Ah, the wonder as once he wakened, out of a dream of remembered blisses.

Couched in the meadows of dreaming blossom to feel, like the touch of a flower on his eyes,

Cool and fresh with the fragment dews of dawn the touch of her light swift kisses,

Shed from the shadowy rose of her face between his face and the warm blue skies.

TT

Lost in his new desire
He dreamed away the hours;
His lyre
Lay buried in the flowers:

To whom the King of Heaven, Apollo, lord of light, Had given Beauty and love and might:

Might, if he would, to slay
All evil dreams and pierce
The grey
Veil of the Universe;

With Love that holds in one Sacred and ancient bond The sun And all the vast beyond, And Beauty to enthrall
The soul of man to heaven:
Yea, all
These gifts to him were given.

Yet in his dream's desire He drowsed away the hours: His lyre Lay buried in the flowers.

Then in his wrath arose
Apollo, lord of light,
That shows
The wrong deed from the right;

And by what radiant laws O'erruling human needs, The cause To consequence proceeds;

How balanced is the sway
He gives each mortal doom:
How day
Demands the atoning gloom:

How all good things await
The soul that pays the price
To Fate
By equal sacrifice;

And how on him that sleeps
For less than labour's sake
There creeps
Uncharmed, the Pythian snake.

III

Lulled by the wash of the feathery grasses, a sea with many a sun-swept billow,

Heart to heart in the heart of the summer, lover by lover asleep they lay.

Hearing only the whirring cicala that chirruped awhile at their poppied pillow

Faint and sweet as the murmur of men that laboured in villages far away.

Was not the menace indeed more silent? Ah, what care for labour and sorrow?

Gods in the meadows of moly and amaranth surely might envy their deep sweet bed

Here where the butterflies troubled the lilies of peace, and took no thought for the morrow,

And golden-girdled bees made feast as over the lotus the soft sun spread.

Nearer, nearer the menace glided, out of the gorgeous gloom around them,

Out of the poppy-haunted shadows deep in the heart of the purple brake;

Till through the hush and the heat as they lay, and their own sweet listless dreams enwound them.—

Mailed and mottled with hues of the grape-bloom suddenly, quietly, glided the snake.

Subtle as jealousy, supple as falsehood, diamond-headed and cruel as pleasure,

Coil by coil he lengthened and glided, straight to the fragrant curve of her throat:

There in the print of the last of the kisses that still glowed red from the sweet long pressure,

Fierce as famine and swift as lightning over the glittering lyre he smote.

IV

And over the cold white body of love and delight
Orpheus arose in the terrible storm of his grief,
With quivering up-clutched hands, deadly and white,
And his whole soul wavered and shook like a wind-swept
leaf:

As a leaf that beats on a mountain, his spirit in vain
Assaulted his doom and beat on the Gates of Death:
Then prone with his arms o'er the lyre he sobbed out his pain,
And the tense chords faintly gave voice to the pulse of his
breath.

And he heard it and rose, once again, with the lyre in his hand,

And smote out the cry that his white-lipped sorrow denied: And the grief's mad ecstasy swept o'er the summer-sweet land, And gathered the tears of all Time in the rush of its tide.

There was never a love forsaken or faith forsworn,

There was never a cry for the living or moan for the slain, But was voiced in that great consummation of song; ay, and borne

To storm on the Gates of the land whence none cometh again.

Transcending the barriers of earth, comprehending them all He followed the soul of his loss with the night in his eyes; And the portals lay bare to him there; and he heard the faint call

Of his love o'er the rabble that wails by the river of sighs.

Yea, there in the mountains before him, he knew it of old,
That portal enormous of gloom, he had seen it in dreams,
When the secrets of Time and of Fate through his harmonies
rolled:

And behind it he heard the dead moan by their desolate streams.

And he passed through the Gates with the light and the cloud of his song.

Dry-shod over Lethe he passed to the chasms of hell;

And the hosts of the dead made mock at him, crying, How long Have we dwelt in the darkness, oh fool, and shall evermore dwell ?

Did our lovers not love us? the grey skulls hissed in his face; Were our lips not red? Were these cavernous eyes not bright? Yet us, whom the soft flesh clothed with such roseate grace, Our lovers would loathe if we ever returned to their sight!

Oh then, through the soul of the Singer, a pity so vast Mixed with his anguish that, smiting anew on his lyre, He caught up the sorrows of hell in his utterance at last, Comprehending the need of them all in his own great desire.

\mathbf{v}

And they that were dead, in his radiant music, remembered the dawn with its low deep crimson,

Heard the murmur of doves in the pine-wood, heard the moan of the roaming sea,

Heard and remembered the little kisses, in woods where the last of the moon yet swims on Fragrant, flower-strewn April nights of young-eyed lovers

in Arcady:

Saw the soft blue veils of shadow floating over the billowy grasses

Under the crisp white curling clouds that sailed and trailed through the melting blue;

Heard once more the quarrel of lovers above them pass, as a lark-song passes,

Light and bright, till it vanished away in an eye-bright heaven of silvery dew.

Out of the dark, ah, white as the Huntress, cold and sweet as the petals that crowned her,

Fair and fleet as a fawn that shakes the dew from the fern at break of day:

Wreathed with the clouds of her dusky hair that swept in a sun-bright glory around her,

On through the deserts of hell she came, and the brown air bloomed with the light of May.

On through the deserts of hell she came; for over the fierce and frozen meadows

Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his love by her golden name;

So she arose from her grave in the darkness, and up through the wailing fires and shadows,

On by chasm and cliff and cavern, out of the horrors of death she came.

Then had she followed him, then had he won her, striking a chord that should echo for ever,

Had he been steadfast only a little, nor paused in the great transcendent song;

But ere they had won to the glory of day, he came to the brink of the flaming river

And ceased, to look on his love a moment, a little moment, and overlong.

VI

O'er Phlegethon he stood: Below him roared and flamed The flood For utmost anguish named.

And lo, across the night,
The shining form he knew
With light
Swift footsteps upward drew.

Up through the desolate lands She stole, a ghostly star, With hands Outstretched to him afar.

With arms outstretched, she came
In yearning majesty,
The same
Royal Eurydice.

Up through the ghastly dead She came, with shining eyes And red Sweet lips of child-surprise.

Up through the wizened crowds She stole, as steals the moon Through clouds Of flowery mist in June.

He gazed: he ceased to smite
The golden-chorded lyre:
Delight
Consumed his heart with fire.

Though in that deadly land His task was but half-done, His hand Drooped, and the fight half-won.

He saw the breasts that glowed, The fragrant clouds of hair: They flowed Around him like a snare.

O'er Phlegethon he stood, For utmost anguish named: The flood Below him roared and flamed. Out of his hand the lyre Suddenly slipped and fell, The fire Acclaimed it into hell.

The night grew dark again:
There came a bitter cry
Of pain,
Oh Love, once more I die!

And lo, the earth-dawn broke,
And like a wraith she fled:
He woke
Alone: his love was dead.

He woke on earth: the day Shone coldly: at his side There lay The body of his bride.

VII

Only now when the purple vintage bubbles and winks in the autumn glory,

Only now when the great white oxen drag the weight of the harvest home,

Sunburnt labourers, under the star of the sunset, sing as an old-world story

How two pale and thwarted lovers ever through Arcady still must roam.

Faint as the silvery mists of morning over the peaks that the noonday parches,

On through the haunts of the gloaming musk-rose, down to the rivers that glisten below,

Ever they wander from meadow to pinewood, under the whispering woodbine arches,

Faint as the mists of the dews of the dusk when violets dream and the moon-winds blow.

Though the golden lute of Orpheus gathered the splendours of earth and heaven,

All the golden greenwood notes and all the chimes of the changing sea,

Old men over the fires of winter murmur again that he was not given

The steadfast heart divine to rule that infinite freedom of harmony.

Therefore he failed, say they; but we, that have no wisdom, can only remember

How through the purple perfumed pinewoods white Eurydice roamed and sung:

How through the whispering gold of the wheat, where the poppy burned like a crimson ember,

Down to the valley in beauty she came, and under her feet the flowers upsprung.

Down to the valley she came, for far and far below in the dreaming meadows

Pleaded ever the Voice of voices, calling his love by her golden name:

So she arose from her home in the hills, and down through the blossoms that danced with their shadows,

Out of the blue of the dreaming distance, down to the heart of her lover she came.

FROM THE SHORE

Love, so strangely lost and found,
Love, beyond the seas of death,
Love, immortally re-crowned,
Love, who swayest this mortal breath,
Sweetlier to thy lover's ear
Steals the tale that ne'er was told;
Bright-eyes, ah, thine arms are near,
Nearer now than e'er of old.

When on earth thy hands were mine,
Mine to hold for evermore,
Oft we watched the sunset shine
Lonely from this wave-beat shore;
Pent in prison-cells of clay,
Time had power on thee and me:
Thou and heaven are one to-day,
One with earth and sky and sea;

Indivisible and one!

Beauty hath unlocked the Gate,
Oped the portals of the sun,
Burst the bars of Time and Fate!
Violets in the dawn of Spring
Hold the secret of thine eyes:
Lilies bare their breasts and fling
Scents of thee from Paradise.

Brooklets have thy talk by rote;
Thy farewells array the West;
Fur that clasped thee round the throat
Leaps—a squirrel—to its nest!
Backward from a sparkling eye
Half-forgotten jests return
Where the rabbit lollops by
Hurry-scurry through the fern!

Roses where I lonely pass
Brush my brow and breathe thy kiss:
Zephyrs, whispering through the grass,
Lure me on from bliss to bliss:
Here thy robe is rustling close,
There thy fluttering lace is blown,—
All the tide of beauty flows
Tributary to thine own.

Birds that sleek their shining throats
Capture every curve from thee:
All their golden warbled notes,
Fragments of thy melody,

Crowding, clustering, one by one, Build it upward, spray by spray, Till the lavrock in the sun Pours thy rapture down the day.

Silver birch and purple pine,
Crumpled fern and crimson rose,
Flash to feel their beauty thine,
Clasp and fold thee, warm and close:
Every beat and gleam of wings
Holds thee in its bosom furled;
All that chatters, laughs, and sings,
Darts thy sparkle round the world.

Love, so strangely lost and found,
Love, beyond the seas of death,
Love, immortally re-crowned,
Love, who swayest this mortal breath,
Sweetlier to thy lover's ear
Steals the tale that ne'er was told;
Bright eyes, ah, thine arms are near,
Nearer now than e'er of old.

THE RETURN

O, HEDGES white with laughing may, O, meadows where we met, This heart of mine will break to-day Unless ye, too, forget.

Breathe not so sweet, breathe not so sweet,
But swiftly let me pass
Across the fields that felt her feet
In the old time that was.

A year ago, but one brief year, O, happy flowering land, We wandered here and whispered there, And hand was warm in hand. O, crisp white clouds beyond the hill,
O, lavrock in the skies,
Why do ye all remember still
Her bright uplifted eyes.

Red heather on the windy moor, Wild thyme beside the way, White jasmine by the cottage door, Harden your hearts to-day.

Smile not so kind, smile not so kind,
Thou happy haunted place,
Or thou wilt strike these poor eyes blind
With her remembered face.

REMEMBRANCE

O, UNFORGOTTEN lips, grey haunting eyes,
Soft curving cheeks and heart-remembered brow,
It is all true, the old love never dies;
And, parted, we must meet for ever now.

We did not think it true! We did not think Love meant this universal cry of pain, This crown of thorn, this vinegar to drink, This lonely crucifixion o'er again.

Yet through the darkness of the sleepless night Your tortured face comes meekly answering mine; Dumb, but I know why those mute lips are white; Dark, but I know why those dark lashes shine.

O, love, love, love, what death can set us free From this implacable ghost of memory?

A PRAYER

Only a little, O Father, only to rest
Or ever the night comes and the eternal sleep,
Only to rest a little, a little to weep
In the dead love's pitiful arms, on the dead love's breast,

A little to loosen the frozen fountains, to free Rivers of blood and tears that should slacken the pulse Of this pitiless heart, and appease these pangs that convulse Body and soul; oh, out of Eternity,

A moment to whisper, only a moment to tell
My dead, my dead, what words are so helpless to say—
The dreams unuttered, the prayers no passion could pray,
And then—the eternal sleep or the pains of hell,

I could welcome them, Father, gladly as ever a child Laying his head on the pillow might turn to his rest And remember in dreams, as the hand of the mother is prest On his hair, how the Pitiful blessed him of old and smiled.

LOVE'S GHOST

Ī

Thy house is dark and still: I stand once more

Beside the marble door.

It opens as of old: thy pale, pale face

Peers thro' the narrow space:

Thy hands are mine, thy hands are mine to hold,

Just as of old.

II

"Hush! hush! or God will hear us! Ah, speak low As Love spake long ago."

"Sweet, sweet, are these thine arms, thy breast, thy hair Assuaging my despair,

Assuaging the long thirst, quenching the tears Of all these years?

III

"Thy house is deep and still: God cannot hear; Sweet, have no fear!

Are not thy cold lips crushed against my kiss?

Love gives us this,

Not God;" but "Ah," she moans, "God hears us; speak, Speak low, hide cheek on cheek."

IV

Oh then what eager whisperings, hoarded long,
Sweeter than any song,
What treasured news to tell, what hopes, what fears,
Gleaned from the barren years,

What raptures wrung from out the heart of pain, What wild farewells again!

V

Whose pity is this? Ah, quick, one kiss! Once more Closes the marble door!

I grope here in the darkness all alone.

Across the cold white stone.

Over thy tomb, a sudden starlight gleams:

Death gave me this—in dreams.

ON A RAILWAY PLATFORM

A drizzle of drifting rain
And a blurred white lamp o'erhead,
That shines as my love will shine again
In the world of the dead.

Round me the wet black night,
And, afar in the limitless gloom,
Crimson and green, two blossoms of light,
Two stars of doom.

But the night of death is aflare
With a torch of back-blown fire,
And the coal-black deeps of the quivering air
Rend for my soul's desire.

Leap, heart, for the pulse and the roar
And the lights of the streaming train
That leaps with the heart of thy love once more
Out of the mist and the rain.

Out of the desolate years

The thundering pageant flows;
But I see no more than a window of tears

Which her face has turned to a rose.

OXFORD REVISITED

Changed and estranged, like a ghost, I pass the familiar portals, Echoing now like a tomb, they accept me no more as of old; Yet I go wistfully onward, a shade thro' a kingdom of mortals Wanting a face to greet me, a hand to grasp and to hold.

Hardly I know as I go if the beautiful City is only

Mocking me under the moon, with its streams and its willows agleam,

Whether the City of friends or I that am friendless and lonely, Whether the boys that go by or the time-worn towers be the dream;

Whether the walls that I know, or the unknown fugitive faces, Faces like those that I loved, faces that haunt and waylay, Faces so like and unlike, in the dim unforgettable places, Startling the heart into sickness that aches with the sweet of the May.—

Whether all these or the world with its wars be the wandering shadows!

Ah, sweet over green-gloomed waters the may hangs, erimson and white;

And quiet canoes ereep down by the warm gold dusk of the meadows,

Lapping with little splashes and ripples of silvery light.

Others as I have returned: I shall see the old faces to-morrow, Down by the gay-coloured barges, alert for the throb of the oars,

Wanting to row once again, or tenderly jesting with sorrow Up the old stairways and noting the strange new names on the doors.

Is it a dream? And I know not nor care if there be an awaking Ever at all any more, for the years that have torn us apart,

Few, so few as they are, will ever be rending and breaking:
Sooner by far than I knew have they wrought this change
for my heart!

Well; I grow used to it now! Could the dream but remain and for ever,

With the flowers round the grey quadrangle laughing as time grows old!

For the waters go down to the sea, but the sky still gleams on the river!

We plucked them—but there shall be lilies, ivory lilies and gold.

And still, in the beautiful City, the river of life is no duller, Only a little strange as the eighth hour dreamily chimes,

In the City of friends and echoes, ribbons and music and colour, Lilac and blossoming chestnut, willows and whispering limes.

Over the Radeliffe Dome the moon as the ghost of a flower Weary and white awakes in the phantom fields of the sky: The trustful shepherded clouds are asleep over steeple and tower,

Dark under Magdalen walls the Cher like a dream goes by.

Back, we come wandering back, poor ghosts, to the home that one misses

Out in the shelterless world, the world that was heaven to us then,

Back from the coil and the vastness, the stars and the boundless abysses,

Like monks from a pilgrimage stealing in bliss to their cloisters again.

City of dreams that we lost, accept now the gift we inherit— Love, such a love as we knew not of old in the blaze of our noon.

We that have found thee at last, half City, half heavenly Spirit,

While over a mist of spires the sunset mellows the moon.

THE THREE SHIPS

(To an old Tune)

T

As I went up the mountain-side,
The sea below me glittered wide,
And, Eastward, far away, I spied
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
The three great ships that take the tide
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Π

Ye have heard the song, how these must ply
From the harbours of home to the ports o' the sky!
Do ye dream none knoweth the whither and why
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
The three great ships go sailing by
On Christmas Day in the morning?

III

Yet, as I live, I never knew
That ever a song could ring so true,
Till I saw them break thro' a haze of blue
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And the marvellous ancient flags they flew
On Christmas Day in the morning!

IV

From the heights above the belfried town
I saw that the sails were patched and brown,
But the flags were a-flame with a great renown
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
And on every mast was a golden crown
On Christmas Day in the morning.

V

Most marvellous ancient ships were these!
Were their prows a-plunge to the Chersonese?
For the pomp of Rome or the glory of Greece,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day,
Were they out on a quest for the Golden Fleece
On Christmas Day in the morning?

VI

And the sun and the wind they told me there How goodly a load the three ships bear, For the first is gold and the second is myrrh On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day; And the third is frankincense most rare On Christmas Day in the morning.

VII

They have mixed their shrouds with the golden sky,
They have faded away where the last dreams die . . .
Ah yet, will ye watch, when the mist lifts high
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
Will ye see three ships come sailing by
On Christmas Day in the morning?

SLUMBER-SONGS OF THE MADONNA

PRELUDE

Dante saw the great white Rose
Half unclose;
Dante saw the golden bees
Gathering from its heart of gold
Sweets untold,
Love's most honeyed harmonies.

Dante saw the threefold bow
Strangely glow,
Saw the Rainbow Vision rise,
And the Flame that wore the crown
Bending down
O'er the flowers of Paradise.

Something yet remained, it seems;
In his dreams
Dante missed—as angels may
In their white and burning bliss—
Some small kiss
Mortals meet with every day.

Italy in splendour faints
'Neath her saints!
O, her great Madonnas, too,
Faces calm as any moon
Glows in June,
Hooded with the night's deep blue!

What remains? I pass and hear
Everywhere,
Ay, or see in silent eyes
Just the song she still would sing
Thus—a-swing
O'er the cradle where He lies.

Ι

Sleep, little baby, I love thee.

Sleep, little king, I am bending above thee.

How should I know what to sing

Here in my arms as I swing thee to sleep?

Hushaby low,

Rockaby so,

Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring,

Mother has only a kiss for her king!

Why should my singing so make me to weep?

Only I know that I love thee, I love thee,

П

Love thee, my little one, sleep.

Is it a dream? Ah yet, it seems
Not the same as other dreams!
I can but think that angels sang,
When thou wast born, in the starry sky,
And that their golden harps out-rang
While the silver clouds went by!

The morning sun shuts out the stars,
Which are much loftier than the sun;
But, could we burst our prison-bars
And find the Light whence light begun,
The dreams that heralded thy birth
Were truer than the truths of earth;
And, by that far immortal Gleam,
Soul of my soul, I still would dream!

A ring of light was round thy head, The great-eyed oxen nigh thy bed Their cold and innocent noses bowed! Their sweet breath rose like an incense cloud In the blurred and mystic lanthorn light.

About the middle of the night
The black door blazed like some great star
With a glory from afar,
Or like some mighty chrysolite
Wherein an angel stood with white
Blinding arrowy bladed wings
Before the throne of the King of kings;
And, through it, I could dimly see
A great steed tethered to a tree.

Then, with crimson gems aflame Through the door the three kings came, And the black Ethiop unrolled The richly broidered cloth of gold, And pourèd forth before thee there Gold and frankincense and myrrh!

Ш

See, what a wonderful smile! Does it mean
That my little one knows of my love?
Was it meant for an angel that passed unseen,
And smiled at us both from above?
Does it mean that he knows of the birds and the flowers
That are waiting to sweeten his childhood's hours,
And the tales I shall tell and the games he will play,
And the songs we shall sing and the prayers we shall pray
In his boyhood's May,
He and I. one day?

IV

For in the warm blue summer weather We shall laugh and love together:

I shall watch my baby growing,
I shall guide his feet,
When the orange trees are blowing
And the winds are heavy and sweet!

When the orange orchards whiten
I shall see his great eyes brighten
To watch the long-legged camels going
Up the twisted street,
When the orange trees are blowing
And the winds are sweet.

What does it mean? Indeed, it seems A dream! Yet not like other dreams!

We shall walk in pleasant vales,
Listening to the shepherd's song
I shall tell him lovely tales
All day long:
He shall laugh while mother sings
Tales of fishermen and kings.

He shall see them come and go
O'er the wistful sea,
Where rosy oleanders blow
Round blue Lake Galilee,
Kings with fishers' ragged coats
And silver nets across their boats,
Dipping through the starry glow,
With crowns for him and me!
Ah. no;

Crowns for him, not me!

Rockaby so! Indeed, it seems A dream! Yet not like other dreams!

V

Ah, see what a wondeful smile again!
Shall I hide it away in my heart,
To remember one day in a world of pain
When the years have torn us apart,
Little babe,
When the years have torn us apart?

Sleep, my little one, sleep,
Child with the wonderful eyes,
Wild miraculous eyes,
Deep as the skies are deep!
What star-bright glory of tears
Waits in you now for the years
That shall bid you waken and weep?
Ah, in that day, could I kiss you to sleep
Then, little lips, little eyes,
Little lips that are lovely and wise,
Little lips that are dreadful and wise!

VI

Clenched little hands like crumpled roses
Dimpled and dear,
Feet like flowers that the dawn uncloses,
What do I fear?
Little hands, will you ever be clenched in anguish?
White little limbs, will you droop and languish?
Nay, what do I hear?
I hear a shouting, far away,
You shall ride on a kingly palm-strewn way
Some day!

But when you are crowned with a golden crown And throned on a golden throne, You'll forget the manger of Bethlehem town And your mother that sits alone Wondering whether the mighty king Remembers a song she used to sing,

Long ago, "Rockaby so,

Kings may have wonderful jewels to bring, Mother has only a kiss for her king!" . . .

Ah, see what a wonderful smile, once more!

He opens his great dark eyes!

Little child, little king, nay, hush, it is o'er

My fear of those deep twin skies,—

Little child,

You are all too dreadful and wise!

VII

But now you are mine, all mine,
And your feet can lie in my hand so small,
And your tiny hands in my heart can twine,
And you cannot walk, so you never shall fall,
Or be pierced by the thorns beside the door,
Or the nails that lie upon Joseph's floor;
Through sun and rain, through shadow and shine,
You are mine, all mine!

ENCELADUS

In the Black Country, from a little window,
Before I slept, across the haggard wastes
Of dust and ashes, I saw Titanic shafts
Like shadowy columns of wan-hope arise
To waste, on the blear sky, their slow sad wreaths
Of smoke, their infinitely sad slow prayers.
Then, as night deepened, the blast-furnaces,
Red smears upon the sulphurous blackness, turned
All that sad region to a City of Dis,
Where naked, sweating giants all night long
Bowed their strong necks, melted flesh, blood and bone,
To brim the dry ducts of the gods of gloom
With terrible rivers, branches of living gold.

O, like some tragic gesture of great souls
In agony, those awful columns towered
Against the clouds, that city of ash and slag
Assumed the grandeur of some direr Thebes
Arising to the death-chant of those gods,
A dreadful Order climbing from the dark
Of Chaos and Corruption, threatening to take
Heaven with its vast slow storm.

I slept, and dreamed.
ome Titan heart

And like the slow beats of some Titan heart Buried beneath immeasurable woes, The forging-hammers thudded through the dream:

Huge on a fallen tree,
Lost in the darkness of primeval woods,
Enceladus, earth-born Enceladus,
The naked giant, brooded all alone.
Born of the lower earth, he knew not how,
Born of the mire and clay, he knew not when,
Brought forth in darkness, and he knew not why!

Thus, like a wind, went by a thousand years.

Anhungered, yet no comrade of the wolf, And cold, but with no power upon the sun, A master of this world that mastered him!

Thus, like a cloud, went by a thousand years.

Who chained this other giant in his heart That heaved and burned like Etna? Heavily He bent his brows and wondered and was dumb.

And, like one wave, a thousand years went by.

He raised his matted head and scanned the stars. He stood erect! He lifted his uncouth arms! With inarticulate sounds his uncouth lips Wrestled and strove—I am full-fed, and yet I hunger!

Who set this fiercer famine in my maw?

Can I eat moons, gorge on the Milky Way,
Swill sunsets down, or sup the wash of the dawn
Out of the rolling swine-troughs of the sca?
Can I drink oceans, lie beneath the mountains,
And nuzzle their heavy boulders like a cub
Sucking the dark teats of the tigress? Who,
Who set this deeper hunger in my heart?
And the dark forest echoed—Who? Ah, who?

"I hunger!"
And the night-wind answered him,
"Hunt, then, for food."

"I hunger!"

And the sleek gorged lioness

Drew nigh him, dripping freshly from the kill,

Redder her lolling tongue, whiter her fangs,

And gazed with ignorant eyes of golden flame.

"I hunger!"
Like a breaking sea his cry
Swept through the night. Against his swarthy knees
She rubbed the red wet velvet of her ears
With mellow thunders of unweeting bliss,
Purring—Ah, seek, and you shall find.
Ah, seek, and you shall slaughter, gorge, ah seek,
Seek, seek, you shall feed full, ah seek, ah seek.

Enceladus, earth-born Enceladus,
Bewildered like a desert-pilgrim, saw
A rosy City, opening in the clouds,
The hunger-born mirage of his own heart,
Far, far above the world, a home of gods,
Where One, a goddess, veiled in the sleek waves
Of her deep hair, yet glimmering golden through,
Lifted, with radiant arms, ambrosial food
For hunger such as this! Up the dark hills,
He rushed, a thunder-cloud,
Urged by the famine of his heart. He stood
High on the topmost erags, he hailed the gods
In thunder, and the clouds re-echoed it!

He hailed the gods!
And like a sea of thunder round their thrones
Washing, a midnight sea, his earth-born voice
Besieged the halls of heaven! He hailed the gods!
They laughed, he heard them laugh!
With echo and re-echo, far and wide,
A golden sea of mockery, they laughed!

Enceladus, earth-born Enceladus, Laid hold upon the rosy Gates of Heaven, And shook them with gigantic sooty hands, Asking he knew not what, but not for alms; And the Gates, opened as in jest; And, like a sooty jest, he stumbled in.

Round him the gods, the young and scornful gods, Clustered and laughed to mark the ravaged face, The brutal brows, the deep and dog-like eyes, The blunt black nails, and back with burdens bowed. And, when they laughed, he snarled with uncouth lips And made them laugh again.

"Whence comest thou?"

He could not speak!
How should he speak whose heart within him heaved
And burned like Etna? Through his mouth there came
A sound of ice-bergs in a frozen sea
Of tears, a sullen region of black ice
Rending and breaking, very far away.
They laughed!
He stared at them, bewildered, and they laughed
Again, "Whence comest thou?"

He could not speak!
But through his mouth a moan of midnight woods,
Where wild beasts lay in wait to slaughter and gorge,
A moan of forest-caverns where the wolf
Brought forth her litter, a moan of the wild earth
In travail with strange shapes of mire and clay,
Creatures of clay, clay images of the gods,
That hungered like the gods, the most high gods,
But found no food, and perished like the beasts.

And the gods laughed,—
Art thou, then, such a god? And, like a leaf
Unfolding in dark woods, in his deep brain
A sudden memory woke; and like an ape
He nodded, and all heaven with laughter rocked,
While Artemis cried out with scornful lips,—
Perchance He is the Maker of you all!

Then, piteously outstretching calloused hands, He sank upon his knees, his huge gnarled knees, And echoed, falteringly, with slow harsh tongue,—Perchance, perchance, the Maker of you all.

They wept with laughter! And Aphrodite, she. With keener mockery than white Artemis Who smiled aloof, drew nigh him unabashed In all her blinding beauty. Carelessly, As o'er the brute brows of a stallèd ox Across that sooty muzzle and brawny breast, Contemptuously, she swept her golden hair In one deep wave, a many-millioned scourge Intolerable and beautiful as fire; Then turned and left him, reeling, gasping, dumb, While heaven re-echoed and re-echoed, See, Perchance, perchance, the Maker of us all!

Enceladus, earth-born Enceladus,
Rose to his feet, and with one terrible cry
"I hunger," rushed upon the scornful gods
And strove to seize and hold them with his hands,
And still the laughter deepened as they rolled
Their clouds around them, baffling him. But once,
Once with a shout, in his gigantic arms
He crushed a slippery splendour on his breast
And felt on his harsh skin the cool smooth peaks
Of Aphrodite's bosom. One black hand
Slid down the naked snow of her long side
And bruised it where he held her. Then, like snow
Vanishing in a furnace, out of his arms
The splendour suddenly melted, and a roll
Of thunder split the dream, and headlong down

He fell, from heaven to earth; while, overhead The young and scornful gods—he heard them laugh!—Toppled the crags down after him. He lay Supine. They plucked up Etna by the roots And buried him beneath it. His broad breast Heaved, like that other giant in his heart, And through the crater burst his fiery breath, But could not burst his bonds. And so he lay Breathing in agony thrice a thousand years.

Then came a Voice, he knew not whence, "Arise, Enceladus!" And from his heart a crag Fell, and one arm was free, and one thought free, And suddenly he awoke, and stood upright, Shaking the mountains from him like a dream; And the tremendous light and awful truth Smote, like the dawn, upon his blinded eyes, That out of his first wonder at the world, Out of his own heart's deep humility, And simple worship, he had fashioned gods Of cloud, and heaven out of a hollow shell. And groping now no more in the empty space Outward, but inward in his own deep heart, He suddenly felt the secret gates of heaven Open, and from the infinite heavens of hope Inward, a voice, from the innermost courts of Love, Rang-Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.

Enceladus, the foul Enceladus, When the clear light out of that inward heaven Whose gates are only inward in the soul, Showed him that one true Kingdom, said, "I will stretch

My hands out once again. And, as the God That made me is the Heart within my heart, So shall my heart be to this dust and earth A god and a creator. I will strive With mountains, fires and seas, wrestle and strive, Fashion and make, and that which I have made In anguish I shall love as God loves me."

In the Black Country, from a little window, Waking at dawn, I saw those giant Shafts -O great dark word out of our clder speech, Long since the poor man's kingly heritage— The Shapings, the dim Sceptres of Creation, The Shafts like columns of wan-hope arise To waste, on the blear sky, their slow sad wreaths Of smoke, their infinitely sad slow prayers, Then, as the dawn crimsoned, the sordid clouds, The puddling furnaces, the mounds of slag, The cinders, and the sand-beds and the rows Of wretched roofs, assumed a majesty Beyond all majesties of earth or air; Beauty beyond all beauty, as of a child In rags, upraised thro' the still gold of heaven, With wasted arms and hungering eyes, to bring The armoured seraphim down upon their knees And teach eternal God humility; The solemn beauty of the unfulfilled Moving towards fulfilment on a height Beyond all heights; the dreadful beauty of hope; The naked wrestler struggling from the rock Under the sculptor's chisel; the rough mass Of clay more glorious for the poor blind face And bosom that half emerge into the light, More alorious and august, even in defeat, Than that too cold dominion God foreswore To bear this passionate universal load, This Calvary of Creation, with mankind.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

Ι

In the cool of the evening, when the low sweet whispers waken,
When the labourers turn them homeward, and the weary
have their will.

When the censers of the roses o'er the forest-aisles are shaken, Is it but the wind that cometh o'er the far green hill?

Π

For they say 'tis but the sunset winds that wander through the heather,

Rustle all the meadow-grass and bend the dewy fern;

They say 'tis but the winds that bow the reeds in prayer together,

And fill the shaken pools with fire along the shadowy burn.

III

In the beauty of the twilight, in the Garden that He loveth,
They have veiled His lovely vesture with the darkness of a
name!

Thro' His Garden, thro' His Garden it is but the wind that moveth,

No more; but O, the miracle, the miracle is the same!

TV

In the cool of the evening, when the sky is an old story Slowly dying, but remembered, ay, and loved with passion still,

Hush! . . . the fringes of His garment, in the fading golden glory.

Softly rustling as He cometh o'er the far green hill.

A ROUNDHEAD'S RALLYING SONG

Ι

How beautiful is the battle,
How splendid are the spears,
When our banner is the sky
And our watchword *Liberty*,
And our kingdom lifted high above the years.

II

How purple shall our blood be,
How glorious our sears,
When we lie there in the night
With our faces full of light
And the death upon them smiling at the stars.

III

How golden is our hauberk,
And steel, and steel our sword,
And our shield without a stain
As we take the field again,
We whose armour is the armour of the Lord?

VICISTI, GALILÆE

"The shrines are dust, the gods are dead,"
They cried in ancient Rome!
"Ah yet, the Idalian rose is red,
And bright the Paphian foam:
For all your Galilæan tears
We turn to her," men say . . .
But we, we hasten thro' the years
To our own yesterday.

Thro' all the thousand years ye need
To make the lost so fair,
Before ye can award His meed
Of perfect praise and prayer!
Ye liberated souls, the crown
Is yours; and yet, some few
Can hail, as this great Cross goes down
Its distant triumph, too.

Poor scornful Lilliputian souls,
And are ye still too proud
To risk your little aureoles
By kneeling with the crowd?

Do ye still dream ye "stand alone" So fearless and so strong? To-day we claim the rebels' throne And leave you with the throng.

Yes, He has conquered! You at least
The "van-guard" leaves behind
To croon old tales of king and priest
In the ingles of mankind:
The breast of Aphrodite glows,
Apollo's face is fair;
But O, the world's wide anguish knows
No Apollonian prayer.

Not ours to scorn the first white gleam
Of beauty on this earth,
The clouds of dawn, the nectarous dream,
The gods of simpler birth;
But, as ye praise them, your own cry
Is fraught with deeper pain,
And the Compassionate ye deny
Returns, returns again.

O, worshippers of the beautiful,
Is this the end then, this,—
That ye can only see the skull
Beneath the face of bliss?
No monk in the dark years ye scorn
So barren a pathway trod
As ye who, ceasing not to mourn,
Deny the mourner's God.

And, while ye scoff, on every side
Great hints of Him go by,—
Souls that are hourly crucified
On some new Calvary!
O, tortured faces, white and meek,
Half seen amidst the crowd,
Grey suffering lips that never speak,
The Glory in the Cloud!

In flower and dust, in chaff and grain,
He binds Himself and dies!
We live by His eternal pain,
His hourly sacrifice;
The limits of our mortal life
Are His. The whisper thrills
Under the sea's perpetual strife,
And through the sunburnt hills.

Darkly, as in a glass, our sight
Still gropes thro' Time and Space:
We cannot see the Light of Light
With angels, face to face:
Only the tale His martyrs tell
Around the dark earth rings
He died and He went down to hell
And lives—the King of Kings!

And, while ye scoff, from shore to shore,
From sea to moaning sea,
Eloi, Eloi, goes up once more
Lama sabacthani!
The heavens are like a scroll unfurled,
The writing flames above—
This is the King of all the world
Upon His Cross of Love.

DRAKE

DEDICATED TO
RUDOLPH CHAMBERS LEHMANN

PROLOGUE TO AMERICAN EDITION

I

ENGLAND, my mother,

Lift to my western sweetheart

One full cup of English mead, breathing of the may!

Pledge the may-flower in her face that you and ah, none other,

Sent her from the mother-land

Across the dashing spray.

II

Hers and yours the story:

Think of it, oh, think of it-

That immortal dream when El Dorado flushed the skies!

Fill the beaker full and drink to Drake's undying glory,

Yours and hers (Oh, drink of it!)
The dream that never dies.

Ш

Yours and hers the free-men

Who scanned the stars and westward sung

When a king commanded and the Atlantic thundered "Nay!"

Hers as yours the pride is, for Drake our first of seamen

First upon his bow-sprit hung

That bunch of English may.

IV

Pledge her deep, my mother;

Through her veins thy life-stream runs!

Spare a thought, too, sweetheart, for my mother o'er the sea! Younger eyes are yours; but ah, those old eyes and none other

Once bedewed the may-flower; once, As yours, were clear and free.

V

Once! Nay, now as ever
Beats within her ancient heart
All the faith that took you forth to seek your heaven alone:
Shadows come and go; but let no shade of doubt dissever,
Cloak, or cloud, or keep apart
Two souls whose prayer is one.

VI

Sweetheart, ah, be tender—
Tender with her prayer to-night!
Such a goal might yet be ours!—the battle-flags be furled,
All the wars of earth be crushed, if only now your slender
Hand should grasp her gnarled old hand
And federate the world.

VII

Foolish it may seem, sweet!
Still the battle thunder lours:
Darker look the Dreadnoughts as old Europe goes her way!
Yet your hand, your hand, has power to crush that evil dream, sweet;
You, with younger eyes than ours

And brows of English may.

VIII

If a singer cherishes
Idle dreams or idle words,
You shall judge—and you'll forgive: for, far away or nigh,
Still abides that Vision without which a people perishes:
Love will strike the atoning chords!
Hark—there comes a cry!

IX

Over all this earth, sweet,

The poor and weak look up to you—

Lift their burdened shoulders, stretch their fettered hands in

prayer:
You, with gentle hands, can bring the world-wide dream to birth, sweet,

While I lift this cup to you And wonder—will she care?

\mathbf{X}

Kindle, eyes, and beat, heart!

Hold the brimming beaker up!

All the may is burgeoning from East to golden West!

England, my mother, greet America, my sweetheart:

—Ah, but ere I drained the cup

I found her on your breast.

EXORDIUM

WHEN on the highest ridge of that strange land, Under the cloudless blinding tropic blue, Drake and his band of swarthy seamen stood With dazed eves gazing round them, emerald fans Of palm that fell like fountains over cliffs Of gorgeous red anana bloom obscured Their sight on every side. Illustrious gleams Of rose and green and gold streamed from the plumes That flashed like living rainbows through the glades. Piratic glints of musketoon and sword, The scarlet scarves around the tawny throats, The bright gold ear-rings in the sun-black ears, And the calm faces of the negro guides Opposed their barbarous bravery to the noon: Yet a deep silence dreadfully besieged Even those mighty hearts upon the verge Of the undiscovered world. Behind them lav

The old earth they knew. In front they could not see What lay beyond the ridge. Only they heard Cries of the painted birds troubling the heat And shivering through the woods; till Francis Drake Plunged through the hush, took hold upon a tree, The tallest near them, and clomb upward, branch By branch.

And there, as he swung clear above
The steep-down forest, on his wondering eyes,
Mile upon mile of rugged shimmering gold,
Burst the unknown immeasurable sea.
Then he descended; and with a new voice
Vowed that, God helping, he would one day plough
Those virgin waters with an English keel.

So here before the unattempted task, Above the Golden Ocean of my dream I clomb and saw in splendid pageant pass The wild adventures and heroic deeds Of England's epic age, a vision lit With mighty prophecies, fraught with a doom Worthy the great Homeric roll of song, Yet all unsung and unrecorded quite By those who might have touched with Raphael's hand The large imperial legend of our race, Ere it brought forth the braggarts of an hour, Self-worshippers who love their imaged strength, And as a symbol for their own proud selves Misuse the sacred name of this dear land, While England to the Empire of her soul Like some great Prophet passes through the crowd That cannot understand; for he must climb Up to that sovran thunder-smitten peak Where he shall grave and trench on adamant The Law that God shall utter by the still Small voice, not by the whirlwind or the fire. There labouring for the Highest in himself He shall achieve the good of all mankind; And from that lonely Sinai shall return Triumphant o'er the little gods of gold That rule their little hour upon the plain.

Oh, thou blind master of these opened eyes Be near me, therefore, now; for not in pride I lift lame hands to this imperious theme; But yearning to a power above mine own Even as a man might lift his hands in prayer. Or as a child, perchance, in those dark days When London lay beleaguered and the axe Flashed out for a bigot empire; and the blood Of martyrs made a purple path for Spain Up to the throne of Mary: as a child Gathering with friends upon a winter's morn For some mock fight between the hateful prince Philip and Thomas Wyatt, all at once Might see in gorgeous ruffs embastioned Popiniav plumes and slouching hats of Spain, Gay shimmering silks and rich encrusted gems, Gold collars, rare brocades, and sleek trunk-hose The Ambassador and peacock courtiers come Strutting along the white snow-strangled street, A walking plot of scarlet Spanish flowers, And with one cry a hundred boyish hands Put them to flight with snowballs, while the wind All round their Spanish ears hissed like a flight Of white-winged geese: so may I wage perchance A mimic war with all my heart in it. Munitioned with mere perishable snow Which mightier hands one day will urge with steel. Yet may they still remember me as I Remember, with one little laugh of love, That child's game, this were wealth enough for me.

Mother and love, fair England, hear my prayer; Help me that I may tell the enduring tale Of that great seaman, good at need, who first Sailed round this globe and made one little isle, One little isle against that huge Empire Of Spain whose might was paramount on earth, O'ertopping Babylon, Nineveh, Greece, and Rome, Carthage and all huge Empires of the past, He made this little isle, against the world, Queen of the earth and sea. Nor this alone The theme; for, in a mightier strife engaged Even than he knew, he fought for the new faiths, Championing our manhood as it rose And east its feudal chains before the seat Of kings; nay, in a mightier battle yet He fought for the soul's freedom, fought the fight Which, though it still rings in our wondering ears, Was won then and for ever—that great war, That last Crusade of Christ against His priests, Wherein Spain fell behind a thunderous roar Of ocean triumph over burning ships And shattered fleets, while England, England rose, Her white cliffs laughing out across the waves, Victorious over all her enemies.

And while he won the world for her domain, Her loins brought forth, her fostering bosom fed Souls that have swept the spiritual seas From heaven to hell, and justified her crown. For round the throne of great Elizabeth Spenser and Burleigh, Sidney and Verulam, Clustered like stars, rare Jonson like the crown Of Cassiopeia, Marlowe ruddy as Mars, And over all those mighty hearts arose The soul of Shakespeare brooding far and wide Beyond our small horizons, like a light Thrown from a vaster sun that still illumes Tracts which the arc of our increasing day Must still leave undiscovered, unexplored.

Mother and love, fair England, hear my prayer, As thou didst touch the heart and light the flame Of wonder in those eyes which first awoke To beauty and the sea's adventurous dream Three hundred years ago, three hundred years, And five long decades, in the leafy lanes Of Devon, where the tallest trees that bore The raven's matted nest had yielded up

Their booty, while the perilous branches swayed Beneath the boyish privateer, the king Of many young companions, Francis Drake; So hear me, and so help, for more than his My need is, even than when he first set sail Upon that wild adventure with three ships And three-score men from grey old Plymouth Sound, Not knowing if he went to life or death, Not caring greatly, so that he were true To his own sleepless and unfaltering soul Which could not choose but hear the ringing call Across the splendours of the Spanish Main From ever fading, ever new horizons, And shores beyond the sunset and the sea.

Mother and sweetheart, England; from whose breast, With all the world before them, they went forth, Thy seamen, o'er the wide uncharted waste, Wider than that Ulysses roamed of old. Even as the wine-dark Mediterranean Is wider than some wave-relinquished pool Among its rocks, yet none the less explored 'To greater ends than all the pride of Greece And pomp of Rome achieved: if my poor song Now spread too wide a sail, forgive thy son And lover, for thy love was ever wont To lift men up in pride above themselves To do great deeds which of themselves alone They could not: thou hast led the unfaltering feet Of even thy meanest heroes down to death. Lifted poor knights to many a great emprise. Taught them high thoughts, and though they kept their souls

Lowly as little children, bidden them lift Eyes unappalled by all the myriad stars That wheel around the great white throne of God.

BOOK I

Now through the great doors of the Council-room Magnificently streamed in rich array The peers of England, regal of aspect And grave. Their silence waited for the Queen: And even now she came; and through their midst, Low as they bowed, she passed without a smile And took her royal seat. A bodeful hush Of huge anticipation gripped all hearts, Compressed all brows, and loaded the broad noon With gathering thunder: none knew what the hour Might vet bring forth; but the dark fire of war Smouldered in every eye; for every day The Council met debating how to join Honour with peace, and every day new tales Of English wrongs received from the red hands Of that gigantic Empire, insolent Spain, spurred fiercer resentments up like steeds Revolting, on the curb, foaming for battle, In all men's minds, against whatever odds. On one side of the throne great Walsingham, A lion of England, couchant, watchful, calm, Was now the master of opinion: all Drew to him. Even the hunchback Burleigh smiled With half-ironic admiration now. As in the presence of the Queen they met Amid the sweeping splendours of her court, A cynic smile that seemed to say, "I, too, Would fain regain that forthright heart of fire; Yet statesmanship is but a smoother name For the superior cunning which ensures Victory." And the Queen, too, knowing her strength And weakness, though her woman's heart leaped out To courage, yet with woman's craft preferred The subtler strength of Burleigh; for she knew Mary of Scotland waited for that war To strike her in the side for Rome: she knew How many thousands lurked in England still Remembering Rome and bloody Mary's reign.

France o'er a wall of bleeding Huguenots Watched for an hour to strike. Against all these What shield could England raise, this little isle,—Out-matched, outnumbered, perilously near Utter destruction?

So the long debate

Proceeded.

All at once there came a cry Along the streets and at the palace-gates And at the great doors of the Council-room! Then through the pikes and halberds a voice rose Imperative for entrance, and the guards Made way, and a strange whisper surged around, And through the peers of England thrilled the blood Of Agincourt as to the foot of the throne Came Leicester, for behind him as he came A seaman stumbled, travel-stained and torn, Crying for justice, and gasped out his tale. "The Spaniards," he moaned, "the Inquisition! They have taken all my comrades, all our crew. And flung them into dungeons: there they lie Waiting for England, waiting for their Queen! Will you not free them? I alone am left! All London is afire with it, for this Was one of your chief city merchant's ships— The Pride of London, one of Osborne's ships! But there is none to help them! I escaped With shricks of torment ringing in these ears. The glare of torture-chambers in these eyes That see no faces anywhere but blind Blind faces, each a bruise of white that smiles In idiot agony, washed with sweat and blood, The face of some strange thing that once was man. And now can only turn from side to side Babbling like a child, with mouth agape, And crying for help where there is none to hear Save those black vizards in the furnace-glow. Moving like devils at their hellish trade. . . ." He paused; his memory sickened, his brain swooned Back into that wild glare of obscene pain!

Once more to his ears and nostrils horribly crept
The hiss and smell of shrivelling human flesh!
His dumb stare told the rest: his head sank down;
He strove in agony
With what all hideous words must leave untold;
While Leicester vouched him, "This man's tale is true!"
But like a gathering storm a low deep moan
Of passion, like a tiger's, slowly crept
From the grey lips of Walsingham. "My Queen,
Will you not free them?"

Then Elizabeth,

Whose name is one for ever with the name Of England, rose; and in her face the gleam Of justice that makes anger terrible Shone, and she stretched her glittering sceptre forth And spoke, with distant empires in her eyes.

"My lords, this is the last cry they shall wring From English lips unheeded: we will have Such remedies for this as all the world Shall tremble at!"

And, on that night, while Drake Close in his London lodging lay concealed Until he knew if it were peace or war With Spain (for he had struck on the high seas At Spain; and well he knew if it were peace His blood would be made witness to that bond. And he must die a pirate's death or fly Westward once more), there all alone, he pored By a struggling rushlight o'er a well-thumbed chart Of magic islands in the enchanted seas. Dreaming, as boys and poets only dream With those that see God's wonders in the deep, Perilous visions of those palmy keys, Cocoa-nut islands, parrot-haunted woods, Crisp coral reefs and blue shark-finned lagoons Fringed with the creaming foam, mile upon mile Of mystery. Dream after dream went by, Colouring the brown air of that London night With many a mad miraculous romance.

There, suddenly, some augury, some flash Showed him a coming promise, a strange hint, Which, though he played with it, he scarce believed; Strange as in some dark cave the first fierce gleam Of pirate gold to some forlorn maroon Who tiptoes to the heap and glances round Askance, and dreads to hear what erst he longed To hear-some voice to break the hush: but bathes Both hands with childish laughter in the gold. And lets it trickle through his fevered palms, And begins counting half a hundred times And loses count each time for sheer delight And wonder in it; meantime, if he knew, Passing the cave-mouth, far away, beyond The still lagoon, the coral reef, the foam And the white fluttering chatter of the birds, A sail that might have saved him comes and goes Unseen across the blue Pacific sea. So Drake, too, played with fancies; but that sail Passed not unseen, for suddenly there came A firm and heavy footstep to the door, Then a loud knocking; and, at first, he thought "I am a dead man: there is peace with Spain, And they are come to lead me to my doom." But, as he looked across one shoulder, pride Checking the fuller watch for what he feared. The door opened; and cold as from the sea The night rushed in, and there against the gloom, Clad, as it seemed, with wind and cloud and rain, There loomed a stately form and high grim face Loaded with deadly thoughts of iron war-Walsingham,-in one hand he held a map Marked with red lines; the other hand held down The rich encrusted hilt of his great sword. Then Drake rose, and the other cautiously Closing the door drew near the flickering light And spread his map out on the table, saying-"Mark for me here the points whereat the King Philip of Spain may best be wounded, mark The joints of his harness;" and Drake looked at his. Thinking, "If he betray me, I am dead."

But the soldier met his eyes and, with a laugh, Drake, quivering like a bloodhound in the leash, Stooped, with his finger pointing thus and thus— "Here would I guard, here would I lie in wait, Here would I strike him through the breast and throat." And as he spoke he kindled, and began To set forth his great dreams, and high romance Rose like a moon reflecting the true sun Unseen: and as the full round moon indeed Rising behind a mighty mountain-chain Will shadow forth in outline grim and black Its vast and ragged edges, so that moon Of high romance rose greatly shadowing forth The grandeur of his dreams, until their might Dawned upon Walsingham, and he, too, saw For a moment of muffled moonlight and wild cloud The vision of the imperious years to be! But suddenly Drake paused as one who strays Beyond the bounds of caution, paused and cursed His tongue for prating like a moon-struck boy's. "I am mad," he cried, "I am mad to babble so!" Then Walsingham drew near him with strange eves And muttered slowly, "Write that madness down; Av. write it down, that madman's plan of thine; Sign it, and let me take it to the Queen." But the weather-wiser seaman warily Answered him, "If it please Almighty God To take away our Queen Elizabeth, Seeing that she is mortal as ourselves, England might then be leagued with Spain, and I Should here have sealed my doom. I will not put My pen to paper."

So, across the charts With that dim light on each grim countenance The seaman and the courtier subtly fenced With words and thoughts, but neither would betray His whole heart to the other. At the last Walsingham gripped the hand of Francis Drake

And left him wondering.

On the third night came A messenger from Walsingham who bade Drake to the Palace where, without one word, The statesman met him in an anteroom And led him, with flushed cheek and beating heart, Along a mighty gold-gloomed corridor Into a high-arched chamber, hung with tall Curtains of gold-fringed silk and tapestries From Flanders looms, whereon were flowers and beasts And forest-work, great knights, with hawk on hand, Riding for ever on their glimmering steeds Through bowery glades to some immortal face Beyond the fairy fringes of the world. A silver lamp swung softly overhead, Fed with some perfumed oil that shed abroad Delicious light and fragrances as rare As those that stirred faint wings at eventide Through the King's House in Lebanon of old. Into a quietness as of fallen bloom Their feet sank in that chamber; and, all round. Soft hills of Moorish cushions dimly drowsed On glimmering crimson couches. Near the lamp An ebony chess-board stood inlaid with squares Of ruby and emerald, garnished with cinquefoils Of silver, bears and ragged staves: the men. Likewise of precious stones, were all arrayed— Bishops and knights and elephants and pawns— As for a game. Sixteen of them were set In silver white, the other sixteen gilt. Now, as Drake gazed upon an arras, nigh The farther doors, whereon was richly wrought The picture of that grave and lovely queen Penelope, with cold hands weaving still The unending web, while in an outer court The broad-limbed wooers basking in the sun On purple fleeces took from white-armed girls, Up-kirtled to the knee, the crimson wine; There, as he gazed and thought, "Is this not like Our Queen Elizabeth who waits and weaves, Penelope of England, her dark web Unendingly till England's Empire come;"

There, as he gazed, for a moment, he could vow The pictured arras moved. Well had it been Had he drawn sword and pierced it through and through; But he suspected nothing and said nought To Walsingham: for thereupon they heard The sound of a low lute and a sweet voice Carolling like a gold-eaged nightingale, Caught by the fowlers ere he found his mate, And singing all his heart out evermore To the unknown forest-love he ne'er should see. And Walsingham smiled sadly to himself, Knowing the weary queen had bidden some maid Sing to her, even as David sang to Saul; Since all her heart was bitter with her love Or so it was breathed (and there the chess-board stood, Her love's device upon it), though she still, For England's sake, must keep great foreign kings Her suitors, wedding no man till she died. Nor did she know how, in her happiest hour Remembered now most sorrowfully, the moon, Vicegerent of the sky, through summer dews, As that sweet ballad tells in plaintive rhyme, Silvering the grev old Cumnor towers and all The hollow haunted oaks that grew thereby, Gleamed on a casement whence the pure white face Of Amy Robsart, wife of Leicester, wife Unknown of the Queen's lover, a frail bar To that proud Earl's ambition, quietly gazed And heard the night-owl hoot a dark presage Of murder through her timid shuddering heart. But of that deed Elizabeth knew nought; Nay, white as Amy Robsart in her dream Of love she listened to the sobbing lute, Bitterly happy, proudly desolate; So heavy are all earth's crowns and sharp with thorns! But tenderly that high-born maiden sang.

SONG

Now the purple night is past,
Now the moon more faintly glows,
Dawn has through thy casement cast
Roses on thy breast, a rose;
Now the kisses are all done,
Now the world awakes anew,
Now the charmèd hour is gone,
Let not love go, too.

When old winter, creeping nigh,
Sprinkles raven hair with white,
Dims the brightly glancing eye,
Laughs away the dancing light,
Roses may forget their sun,
Lilies may forget their dew,
Beauties perish, one by one,
Let not love go, too.

Palaces and towers of pride
Crumble year by year away;
Creeds like robes are laid aside,
Even our very tombs decay!
When the all-conquering moth and rust
Gnaw the goodly garment through,
When the dust returns to dust,
Let not love go, too.

Kingdoms melt away like snow,
Gods are spent like wasting flames,
Hardly the new peoples know
Their divine thrice-worshipped names!
At the last great hour of all,
When thou makest all things new,
Father, hear Thy children call,
Let not love go, too.

The song ceased: all was still; and now it seemed Power brooded on the silence, and Drake saw A woman come to meet him,-tall and pale And proud she seemed: behind her head two wings As of some mighty phantom butterfly Glimmered with jewel-sparks in the gold gloom. Her small, pure, grey-eyed face above her ruff Was chiselled like an agate; and he knew It was the Queen. Low bent he o'er her hand; And "Ah," she said, "Sir Francis Walsingham Hath told me what an English heart beats here! Know you what injuries the King of Spain Hath done us?" Drake looked up at her: she smiled, "We find you apt! Will you not be our knight For we are helpless"—witchingly she smiled— "We are not ripe for war; our policy Must still be to uphold the velvet cloak Of peace; but I would have it mask the hand That holds the dagger! Will you not unfold Your scheme to us?" And then with a low bow Walsingham, at a signal from the Queen, Withdrew; and she looked down at Drake and smiled: And in his great simplicity the man Spake all his heart out like some youthful knight Before his Gloriana: his heart burned, Knowing he talked with England, face to face; And suddenly the Queen bent down to him, England bent down to him, and his heart reeled With the beauty of her presence—for indeed Women alone have royal power like this Within their very selves enthroned and shrined To draw men's hearts out! Royal she bent down And touched his hand for a moment. "Friend," she said, Looking into his face with subtle eyes, "I have searched thy soul to-night and know full well How I can trust thee! Canst thou think that I, The daughter of my royal father, lack The fire which every boor in England feels Burning within him as the bloody score Which Spain writes on the flesh of Englishmen Mounts higher day by day? Am I not Tudor?

I am not deaf or blind; nor yet a king! I am a woman and a queen, and where Kings would have plunged into their red revenge Or set their throne up on this temporal shore, As flatterers bade that wiser king Canúte, Thence to command the advancing tides of battle Till one ensanguined sea whelm throne and king And kingdom, friend, I take my woman's way, Smile in mine enemies' faces with a heart All hell, and undermine them hour by hour! This island scarce can fend herself from France, And now Spain holds the keys of all the world. How should we fight her, save that my poor wit Hath won the key to Philip? Oh. I know His treacherous lecherous heart, and hour by hour My nets are drawing round him. I, that starve My public armies, feed his private foes, Nourish his rebels in the Netherlands, Nay, sacrifice mine own poor woman's heart To keep him mine, and surely now stands Fate With hand uplifted by the doors of Spain Ready to knock: the time is close at hand When I shall strike, once, and no second stroke. Remember, friend, though kings have fought for her. This England, with the trident in her grasp, Was ever woman; and she waits her throne: And thou canst speed it. Furnish thee with ships. Gather thy gentleman adventurers, And be assured thy parsimonious queen— Oh ay, she knows that chattering of the world— Will find thee wealth enough. Then put to sea, Fly the black flag of piracy awhile Against these blackest foes of all mankind. Nay; what hast thou to do with piracy? Hostis humani generis indeed Is Spain: she dwells beyond the bounds of law; Thine is no piracy, whate'er men say, Thou art a knight on Gloriana's quest. Oh, lay that golden unction to thy soul, This is no piracy, but glorious war, Waged for thy country and for all mankind.

263

Therefore put out to sea without one fear, Ransack their El Dorados of the West, Pillage their golden galleons, sap their strength Even at its utmost fountains; let them know That there is blood, not water, in our yeins. Sail on, my captain, to the glorious end, And, though at first thou needs must sail alone And undefended, ere that end be reached, When I shall give the word, nay, but one word, All England shall be up and after thee, The sword of England shall shine over thee, And round about thee like a guardian fire; All the great soul of England shall be there; Her mighty dead shall at that cry of doom Rise from their graves and in God's panoply Plunge with our standards through immertal storms When Drake rides out across the wreck of Rome. As yet we must be cautious: let no breath Escape thee, save to thy most trusted friends; For now, if my lord Burleigh heard one word Of all thou hast in mind, he is so much The friend of caution and the beaten road, He would not rest till he had spilled thy hopes And sealed thy doom! Go now, fit out thy ships. Walsingham is empowered to give thee gold Immediately, but look to him for more As thou shalt need it, gold and gold to spare, My golden-hearted pilot to the shores Of victory-so farewell;" and through the gloom She vanished as she came; and Drake groped, dazed, Out through the doors, and found great Walsingham Awaiting him with gold.

But in the room
Where Drake had held his converse with the Queen
The embroidered arras moved, and a lean face,
White with its long eavesdropping upon death,
Crept out and peered as a venomous adder peers
From out dark ferns, then as the reptile flashes
Along a path between two banks of flowers
Almost too swift for sight, a stealthy form
—One of the fifty spies whom Burleigh paid—

264

Passed down the gold-gloomed corridor to seek His master, whom among great books he found, Calm, like a mountain brooding o'er the sea. Nor did he break that calm for all these winds Of rumour that now burst from out the sky. His brow bent like a cliff over his thoughts, And the spy watched him half resentfully, Thinking his news well worth a blacker frown. At last the statesman smiled and answered, "Go; Fetch Thomas Doughty, Leicester's secretary."

Few suns had risen and set ere Francis Drake Had furnished forth his ships with guns and men, Tried seamen that he knew in storms of old,— Will Harvest, who could haul the ropes and fight All day, and sing a foc'sle song to cheer Sea-weary hearts at night; brave old Tom Moone The carpenter, whose faithful soul looked up To Drake's large mastery with a mastiff's eyes; And three-score trusty mariners, all scarred And weather-beaten. After these there came Some two-score gentleman adventurers. Gay college lads or lawyers that had grown Sick of the dusty Temple, and were fired With tales of the rich Indies and those tall Enchanted galleons drifting through the West, Laden with ingots and broad bars of gold. Already some had bought at a great price Green birds of Guatemala, which they wore On their slouched hats, tasting the high romance And new-found colours of the world like wine. By night they gathered in a marvellous inn Beside the black and secret flowing Thames: And joyously they tossed the magic phrase "Pieces of eight" from mouth to mouth, and laughed And held the red wine up, night after night, Around their tables, toasting Francis Drake. Among these came a courtier, and none knew Or asked by whose approval, for each thought Some other brought him; yet he made his way Cautiously, being a man with a smooth tongue,

The secretary of Leicester; and his name Was Thomas Doughty. Most of all with Drake He won his way to friendship, till at last There seemed one heart between them and one soul.

BOOK II

So on a misty grey December morn Five ships put out from calm old Plymouth Sound; Five little ships, the largest not so large As many a coasting yacht or fishing-trawl To-day; yet these must brave uncharted seas Of unimagined terrors, haunted glooms, And shadowy horrors of an unknown world Wild as primeval chaos. In the first, The Golden Hynde, a ship of eighteen guns, Drake sailed: John Wynter, a queen's captain, next Brought out the Elizabeth, a stout new ship Of sixteen guns. The pinnace Christopher Came next, in staunch command of old Tom Moone Who, five years back, with recking powder grimed, Off Cartagena fought against the stars All night, and, as the sun arose in blood, Knee-deep in blood and brine, stood in the dark Perilous hold and scuttled his own ship The Swan, bidding her down to God's great deep Rather than yield her up a prize to Spain. Lastly two gentleman-adventurers Brought out the new Swan and the Marygold. Their crews, all told, were eight score men and boys. Not only terrors of the deep they braved. Bodiless witchcrafts of the black abvss. Red gaping mouths of hell and gulfs of fire That yawned for all who passed the tropic line; But death lurked round them from their setting forth. Mendoza, plenipotentiary of Spain, By spies informed, had swiftly warned his king, Who sent out mandates through his huge empire From Gaudalchiber to the golden West For the instant sinking of all English ships

And the instant execution of their crews Who durst appear in the Caribbean sea. Moreover, in the pith of their emprise A peril lurked—Burleigh's emissaries, The smooth-tongued Thomas Doughty, who had brought His brother—unacquitted of that charge Of poisoning, raised against him by the friends Of Essex, but in luckless time released Lately for lack of proof, on no strong plea. These two wound through them like two snakes at ease In Eden, waiting for their venomous hour. Especially did Thomas Doughty toil With soft and flowery tongue to win his way; And Drake, whose rich imagination craved For something more than simple seaman's talk, Was marvellously drawn to this new friend Who with the scholar's mind, the courtier's gloss, The lawyer's wit, the adventurer's romance, Gold honey from the blooms of Euphues, Rare flashes from the Mermaid and sweet smiles Copied from Sidney's self, even to the glance Of sudden, liquid sympathy, gave Drake That banquet of the soul he ne'er had known Nor needed till he knew, but needed now. So to the light of Doughty's answering eyes He poured his inmost thoughts out, hour by hour; And Doughty coiled up in the heart of Drake.

Against such odds the tiny fleet set sail; Yet gallantly and with heroic pride, Escutcheoned pavisades, emblazoned poops, Banners and painted shields and close-fights hung With scarlet broideries. Every polished gun Grinned through the jaws of some heraldic beast, Gilded and carven and gleaming with all hues; While in the cabin of the Golden Hynde Rich perfumes floated, given by the great Queen Herself to Drake as Captain-General; So that it seemed her soul was with the fleet, A presence to remind him, far away,

Of how he talked with England, face to face,—
No pirate he, but Gloriana's knight.
Silver and gold his table furniture,
Engraved and richly chased, lavishly gleamed
While, fanned by favouring airs, the ships advanced
With streaming flags and ensigns and sweet chords
Of music struck by skilled musicians
Whom Drake brought with him, not from vanity,
But knowing how the pulse of men beats high
To music; and the hearts of men like these
Were open to the high romance of earth,
And they that dwelt so near God's mystery
Were proud of their own manhood. They went out
To danger, as to a sweetheart, far away.

Light as the sea-birds dipping their white wings In foam before the gently heaving prows Each heart beat, while the low soft lapping splash Of water racing past them ripped and tore Whiter and faster, and the bellying sails Filled out, and the chalk cliffs of England sank Dwindling behind the broad grey plains of sea. Meekly content and tamely stay-at-home The sea-birds seemed that piped across the waves. And Drake, be-mused, leaned smiling to his friend Doughty and said, "Is it not strange to know When we return von speckled herring-gulls Will still be wheeling, dipping, flashing there? We shall not find a fairer land afar Than those thyme-scented hills we leave behind! Soon the young lambs will bleat across the combes And breezes will bring puffs of hawthorn scent Down Devon lanes; over the purple moors Lavrocks will carol; and on the village greens Around the May-pole, while the moon hangs low, The boys and girls of England merrily swing In country footing through the morrice dance. But many of us indeed shall not return. Then the other with a laugh, "Nay, like the man Who slept a hundred years we shall return

268 Drake

And find our England strange: there are great storms Brewing: God only knows what we shall find— Perchance a Spanish king upon the throne! What then?" And Drake, "I should put down my helm And out once more to the unknown golden West To die, as I have lived, in a free land." So said he, while the white cliffs dwindled down. Faded, and vanished; but the prosperous wind Carried the five ships onward over the swell Of swinging, sweeping seas, till the sun sank, And height o'er height the chaos of the skies Broke out into the miracle of the stars. Frostily glittering, all the Milky Way Lay bare like diamond-dust upon the robe Of some great king. Orion and the Plough Glimmered through drifting gulfs of silver fleece. And, far away, in Italy, that night Young Galileo, looking upward, heard The self-same whisper through that wild abvss Which now called Drake out to the unknown West. But, after supper. Drake came up on deck With Doughty, and on the cold poop as they leaned And gazed across the rolling gleam and gloom Of mighty muffled seas, began to give Voices to those lovely captives of the brain Which, like princesses in some forest-tower. Still yearn for the delivering prince, the sweet Far bugle-note that calls from answering minds. He told him how, in those dark days which now Seemed like an evil dream, when the Princess Elizabeth even trembled for her life And read there, by the gleam of Smithfield fires, Those cunning lessons of diplomacy Which saved her then and now for England's sake, He passed his youth. 'Twas when the power of Spain Began to light the gloom with that great glare Of martyrdom which, while the stars endure, Bears witness how men overcame the world. Trod the red flames beneath their feet like flowers. And cast aside the blackening robe of flesh, While with a crown of joy upon their heads,

Even as into a palace, they passed through The portals of the tomb to prove their love Stronger at least than death; and, in those days A Puritan, with iron in his soul, Having in earlier manhood occupied His business in great waters and beheld The bloody cowls of the Inquisition pass Before the midnight moon as he kept watch; And having then forsworn the steely sea To dwell at home in England with his love At Tavistock in Devon, Edmund Drake Began, albeit too near the Abbey walls, To speak too staunchly for his ancient faith; And with his young child Francis, had to flee By night at last for shelter to the coast. Little the boy remembered of that flight, Pillioned behind his father, save the clang And clatter of the hoofs on stony ground Striking a sharp blue fire, while country tales Of highwaymen kindled his reckless heart As the great steed went shouldering through the night There Francis, laving a little sunburnt hand On the big holstered pistol at each side, Dreamed with his wide grev eyes that he himself Was riding out on some freebooting quest. And felt himself heroic. League by league The magic world rolled past him as they rode, Leaving him nothing but a memory Of his own making. Vaguely he perceived A thousand meadows darkly streaming by With clouds of perfume from their secret flowers, A wayside cottage-window pointing out A golden finger o'er the purple road; A puff of garden roses or a waft Of honeysuckle blown along a wood, While overhead that silver ship, the moon, Sailed slowly down the gulfs of glittering stars, Till, at the last, a buffet of fresh wind Fierce with sharp savours of the stinging brine Against his dreaming face brought up a roar Of mystic welcome from the Channel seas.

And there Drake paused for a moment, as a song Stole o'er the waters from the Marygold Where some musician, striking luscious chords Of sweet-stringed music, freed his heart's desire In symbols of the moment, which the rest, And Doughty among them, scarce could understand.

SONG

The moon is up: the stars are bright:
The wind is fresh and free!
We're out to seek for gold to-night
Across the silver sea!
The world was growing grey and old;
Break out the sails again!
We're out to seek a Realm of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.

We're sick of all the cringing knees,
The courtly smiles and lies.
God, let Thy singing Channel breeze
Lighten our hearts and eyes!
Let love no more be bought and sold
For earthly loss or gain.
We're out to seek an Age of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.

Beyond the light of far Cathay,
Beyond all mortal dreams,
Beyond the reach of night and day
Our El Dorado gleams,
Revealing—as the skies unfold—
A star without a stain,
The Glory of the Gates of Gold
Beyond the Spanish Main.

And, as the skilled musician made the words Of momentary meaning still simply His own eternal hope and heart' desire, Without belief, perchance, in Drake's own quest—

To Drake's own greater mind the eternal glory Seemed to transfigure his immediate hope. But Doughty only heard a sweet concourse Of sounds. They ceased. And Drake resumed his tale Of that strange flight in boyhood to the sea. Next, the red-curtained inn and kindly hands Of Protestant Plymouth held his memory long; Often in strange and distant dreams he saw That scene which now he tenderly portraved To Doughty's half-ironic smiling lips, Half-sympathetic eyes; he saw again That small inn parlour with the homely fare Set forth upon the table, saw the gang Of seamen dripping from the spray come in, Like great new thoughts to some adventurous brain. Feeding his wide grey eyes he saw them stand Around the crimson fire and stamp their feet And scatter the salt drops from their big sea-boots: And all that night he lay awake and heard Mysterious thunderings of eternal tides Moaning out of a cold and houseless gloom Beyond the world, that made it seem most sweet To slumber in a little four-walled inn Immune from all that vastness. But at dawn He woke, he leapt from bed, he ran and lookt, There, through the tiny high bright casement, there,— O, fairy vision of that small boy's face Peeping at daybreak through the diamond pane!-There first he saw the wondrous new-born world. And round its princely shoulders wildly flowing, Gemmed with a myriad clusters of the sun, The magic azure mantle of the sea.

And, afterwards, there came those marvellous days When, on that battleship, a disused hulk Rotting to death in Chatham Reach, they found Sanctuary and a dwelling-place at last. For, Hawkins, that great ship-man, being their friend, A Protestant, with power on Plymouth town, Nigh half whereof he owned, made Edmund Drake Reader of prayer to all the ships of war

That lay therein. So there the dreaming boy, Francis, grew up in that grim nursery Among the ropes and masts and great dumb mouths Of idle ordnance. In that hulk he heard Many a time his father and his friends Over some wild-eved troop of refugees Thunder against the powers of Spain and Rome. "Idolaters who defiled the House of God In England;" and all round them, as he heard, The clang and clatter of shipwright hammers rang. And hour by hour upon his vision rose. In solid oak reality, new ships, As Ilion rose to music, ships of war, The visible shapes and symbols of his dream. Unconscious yet, but growing as they grew. A wondrous incarnation, hour by hour. Till with their towering masts they stood complete. Embodied thoughts, in God's own dockyards built. For Drake ere long to lead against the world.

There, as to round the tale with ringing gold, Across the waters from the full-plumed Swan The music of a Mermaid roundelay—Our Lady of the Sea, a Dorian theme Tuned to the soul of England—charmed the moon.

SONG

I

Queen Venus wandered away with a cry,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
For the purple wound in Adon's thigh;
Je vous en prie, pity me;
With a bitter farewell from sky to sky,
And a moan, a moan, from sea to sea;
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

II

The soft Ægean heard her sigh,—

N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—

Heard the Spartan hills reply,

Je vous en prie, pity me;

Spain was aware of her drawing nigh

Foot-gilt from the blossoms of Italy;

N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,

N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

III

In France they heard her voice go by,—
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—
And on the May-wind droop and die,
Je vous en prie, pity me;
Your maidens choose their loves, but I—
White as I came from the foam-white sea,
N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—

IV

The warm red-meal-winged butterfly,—
N'oscrez vous, mon bel ami?—
Beat on her breast in the golden rye,—
Je vous en prie, pity me,—
Stained her breast with a dusty dye
Red as the print of a kiss might be!
N'oscrez vous, mon bel, mon bel,
N'oscrez vous, mon bel ami?

V

Is there no land, afar or nigh—

N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?—

But dreads the kiss o' the sea? Ah, why—

Je vous en prie, pity me!—

Why will ve cling to the loves that die? Is earth all Adon to my plea? N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,

N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

VI

Under the warm blue summer sky,-N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

With outstretched arms and a low long sigh.— Je vous en prie, pity me;-

Over the Channel they saw her fly

To the white-cliffed island that crowns the sea,

N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,

N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

IIII

England laughed as her queen drew nigh,-N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

To the white-walled cottages gleaming high,

Je vous en prie, pity me!

They drew her in with a joyful cry

To the hearth where she sits with a babe on her knee.

She has turned her moan to a lullaby.

She is nursing a son to the kings of the sea.

N'oserez vous, mon bel, mon bel,

N'oserez vous, mon bel ami?

Such memories, on the plunging Golden Hunde, Under the stars, Drake drew before his friend, Clomb for a moment to that peak of vision, That purple peak of Darien, laughing aloud O'er those wild exploits down to Rio Grande Which even now had made his fierce renown Terrible to all lonely ships of Spain. E'en now, indeed, that poet of Portugal, Lope de Vega, filled with this new fear Began to meditate his epic muse Till, like a ery of panie from his lips, He shrilled the faint Dragoutea forth, wherein Drake is that Dragon of the Apocalypse, The dread Antagonist of God and Man.

Well had it been for Doughty on that night Had he not heard what followed: for, indeed. When two minds clash, not often does the less Conquer the greater; but, without one thought Of evil, seeing they now were safe at sea, Drake told him, only somewhat, yet too much, Of that close conference with the Queen. And lo, The face of Doughty blanched with a slow thought That erept like a cold worm through all his brain, "Thus much I knew, though secretly, before; But here he freely tells me as his friend: If I be false and he be what they say, His knowledge of my knowledge will mean death." But Drake looked round at Doughty with a smile And said, "Forgive me now: thou art not used To these cold nights at sea! thou tremblest, friend: Let us go down and drink a cup of sack To our return!" And at that kindly smile Doughty shook off his nightmare mood, and thought, "The vard-arm is for dogs, not gentlemen! Even Drake would not misuse a man of birth!" And in the cabin of the Golden Hynde Revolving subtle treacheries he sat. There with the sugared phrases of the court Bartering beads for gold, he drew out all The simple Devon seaman's inmost heart, And coiled up in the soul of Francis Drake. There in the solemn night they interchanged Lies for sweet confidences. From one wall The picture of Drake's love looked down on him: And, like a bashful schoolboy's, that bronzed face Flushed as he blurted out with brightening eyes And quickening breath how he had seen her first, Crowned on the village green, a Queen of May. Her name, too, was Elizabeth, he said, As if it proved that she, too, was a queen. Though crowned with milk-white Devon may alone, And queen but of one plot of meadow-sweet. As yet, he said, he had only kissed her hand, Smiled in her eyes and-there Drake also flinched. Thinking, "I ne'er may see her face again."

And Doughty comforted his own dark heart Thinking, "I need not fear so soft a soul As this"; and yet, he wondered how the man, Seeing his love so gripped him, none the less Could leave her, thus to follow after dreams; For faith to Doughty was an unknown word, And trustfulness the property of fools. At length they parted, each to his own couch, Doughty with half a chuckle, Francis Drake With one old-fashioned richly grateful prayer Blessing all those he loved, as he had learnt Beside his mother's knee in Devon days.

So all night long they sailed; but when a rift Of orchard crimson broke the vellowing gloom And barred the closely clouded East with dawn, Behold, a giant galleon overhead, Lifting its huge black shining sides on high, Loomed like some misty monster of the deep: And, sullenly rolling out great gorgeous folds. Over her rumbled like a thunder-cloud The heavy flag of Spain. The splendid poop, Mistily lustrous as a dragon's hoard Seen in some magic cave-mouth o'er the sea Through shimmering April sunlight after rain, Blazed to the morning; and her port-holes grinned With row on row of cannon. There at once. One sharp shrill whistle sounded, and those five, Small ships, mere minnows clinging to the flanks Of that Leviathan, unseen, unheard, Undreamt of, grappled her. She seemed asleep, Swinging at ease with great half-slackened sails, Majestically careless of the dawn. There in the very native seas of Spain, There with the yeast and foam of her proud cliffs, Her own blue coasts, in sight across the waves, Up her Titanic sides without a sound The naked-footed British seamen swarmed With knives between their teeth: then on her decks They dropped like panthers, and the softly fierce Black-bearded watch of Spaniards, all amazed,

Rubbing their eyes as if at a wild dream, Upraised a sudden shout, El Draque! El Draque! And flashed their weapons out, but all too late; For, ere their sleeping comrades reached the deck, The little watch, out-numbered and out-matched, Lay bound, and o'er the hatches everywhere The points of naked cutlasses on guard Gleamed, and without a struggle those below Gave up their arms, their poignards jewelled thick With rubies, and their blades of Spanish steel.

Then onward o'er the great grey gleaming sea They swept with their rich booty, night and day. Five other prizes, one for every ship, Out of the seas of Spain they suddenly caught And carried with them, laughing as they went-"Now, now indeed the Rubicon is crossed; Now have we singed the evelids and the beard Of Spain; now have we roused the hornet's nest; Now shall we sail against a world in arms: Now we have nought between us and black death But our own hands, five ships, and three score guns." So laughed they, plunging through the bay of storms, Biscay, and past Gibraltar, not yet clothed With British thunder, though, as one might dream, Gazing in dim prophetic grandeur out Across the waves while that small fleet went by, Or watching them with love's most wistful fear As they plunged Southward to the lonely coasts Of Africa, till right in front up-soared, Tremendous over ocean. Teneriffe. Cloud-robed, but crowned with colours of the dawn.

Already those two traitors were at work, Doughty and his false brother, among the crews, Who knew not yet the vastness of their quest, Nor dreamed of aught beyond the accustomed world; For Drake had kept it secret, and the thoughts Of some that he had shipped before the mast Set sail scarce farther than for Mogadore

In West Morocco, or at the utmost mark For northern Egypt, by the midnight woods And crystal palace roofed with chrysoprase Where Prester John had reigned five hundred years. And Sydon, river of jewels, through the dark Enchanted gorges rolled its rays along! Some thought of Rio Grande; but scarce to ten The true intent was known: while to divert The rest from care the skilled musicians played. But those two Doughtys cunningly devised By chance-dropt words to breathe a hint abroad: And through the foc'sles crept a grisly fear Of things that lay beyond the bourne of earth. Till even those hardy seamen almost quailed; And now, at any whisper, they might turn With terror in their eyes. They might refuse To sail into that fabled burning Void Or brave that primum mobile which drew O'er-daring ships into the jaws of hell Beyond the Poie Antarticke, where the sea Rushed down through fiery mountains, and no sail Could e'er return against its roaring stream.

Now down the coast of Barbary they cruised Till Christmas Eve embraced them in the heart Of summer. In a bay of mellow calm They moored, and as the fragrant twilight brought The stars, the sound of song and dance arose; And down the shores in stealthy silence crept, Out of the massy forest's emerald gloom, The naked, dark-limbed children of the night, Unseen, to gaze upon the floating glare Of revelry; unheard, to hear that strange New music of the gods, where o'er the soft Ripple and wash of the lanthorn-crimsoned tide Will Harvest's voice above the chorus rang.

SONG

In Devonshire, now, the Christmas chime
Is carolling over the lea;
And the sexton shovels away the snow
From the old church porch, maybe;
And the waits with their lanthorns and noses a-glow
Come round for their Christmas fec;
But, as in old England it's Christmas-time,
Why, so is it here at sea,
My lads,
Why, so is it here at sea!

When the ship comes home, from turret to poop
Filled full with Spanish gold,
There'll be many a country dance and joke,
And many a tale to be told;
Every old woman shall have a red cloak
To fend her against the cold;
And every old man shall have a big round stoup
Of jolly good ale and old,
My lads,
Jolly good ale and old!

But on the morrow came a prosperous wind Whereof they took advantage, and shook out The flashing sails, and held their Christmas feast Upon the swirling ridges of the sea: And, sweeping Southward with full many a rouse And shout of laughter, at the fall of day, While the black prows drove, leapt, and plunged, and ploughed Through the broad dazzle of sunset-coloured tides, Outside the cabin of the Golden Hynde, Where Drake and his chief captains dined in state, The skilled musicians made a great new song.

SONG

Ι

Happy by the hearth sit the lasses and the lads, now,
Roasting of their chestnuts, toasting of their toes!
When the door is opened to a blithe new-comer,
Stamping like a ploughman to shuffle off the snows;
Rosy flower-like faces through the soft red firelight
Float as if to greet us, far away at sea,
Sigh as they remember, and turn the sigh to laughter,
Kiss beneath the mistletoe and wonder at their glee.
With their "heigh ho, the holly!
This life is most jolly!"
Christmas-time is kissing-time,
Away with melancholy!

Π

Ah, the Yule of England, the happy Yule of England,
Yule of berried holly and the merry mistletoe;
The boar's head, the brown ale, the blue snapdragon,
Yule of groaning tables and the crimson log aglow!
Yule, the golden bugle to the scattered old companions,
Ringing as with laughter, shining as through tears!
Loved of little children, oh guard the holy Yuletide,
Guard it, men of England, for the child beyond the years.
With its "heigh ho, the holly!"
Away with melancholy!
Christmas-time is kissing-time,
"This life is most jolly!"

Now to the Fortunate Islands of old time
They came, and found no glory as of old
Encircling them, no red ineffable calm
Of sunset round crowned faces pale with bliss
Like evening stars. Rugged and desolate
Those isles were when they neared them, though afar
They beautifully smouldered in the sun
Like dusky purple jewels fringed and frayed
With silver foam across that ancient sea

Of wonder. On the largest of the seven Drake landed Doughtv with his musketeers To exercise their weapons and to seek Supplies among the matted uncouth huts Which, as the ships drew round each ragged cliff, Crept like remembered misery into sight; Oh, like the strange dull waking from a dream They blotted out the rosy courts and fair Imagined marble thresholds of the King Achilles and the heroes that were gone. But Drake cared nought for these things. Such a heart He had, to make each utmost ancient bourne Of man's imagination but a point Of new departure for his Golden Dream. But Doughty with his men ashore, alone, Among the sparse wind-bitten groves of palm, Kindled their fears of all they must endure On that immense adventure. Nay, sometimes He hinted of a voyage far beyond All history and fable, far beyond Even that Void whence only two returned,-Columbus, with his men in mutiny; Magellan, who could only hound his crew Onward by threats of death, until they turned In horror from the Threat that lay before, Preferring to be hanged as mutineers Rather than venture farther. Nor indeed Did even Magellan at the last return: But, with all hell around him, in the clutch Of devils died upon some savage isle By poisonous black enchantment. Not in vain Were Doughty's words on that volcanic shore Among the stunted dark acacia trees, Whose heads, all bent one way by the trade-wind, Pointed North-east by North, South-west by West Ambiguous sibyls that with wizened arms Mysteriously declared a twofold path, Homeward or onward. But aboard the ships, Among the hardier seamen, old Tom Moone, With one or two stout comrades, overbore All doubts and questionings with blither tales

282 Drake

Of how they sailed to Darien and heard Nightingales in November all night long As down a coast like Paradise they cruised Through seas of lasting summer. Eden isles. Where birds like rainbows, butterflies like gems, And flowers like coloured fires o'er fairy creeks Floated and flashed beneath the shadowy palms: While ever and anon a bark canoe With naked Indian maidens flower-festooned Put out from shadowy coves, laden with fruit Ambrosial o'er the silken shimmering sea. And once a troop of nut-brown maidens came— So said Tom Moone, a twinkle in his eye-Swimming to meet them through the warm blue waves And wantoned through the water, like those nymphs Which one green April at the Mermaid Inn Should hear Kit Marlowe mightily portray. Among his boon companions, in a song Of Love that swam the sparkling Hellespont Upheld by nymphs, not lovelier than these,— Though whiter vet not lovelier than these— For those like flowers, but these like rounded fruit Rosily ripening through the clear tides tossed From nut-brown breast and arm all round the ship The thousand-coloured spray. Shapely of limb They were; but as they laid their small brown hands Upon the ropes we cast them, Captain Drake Suddenly thundered at them and bade them pack For a troop of naughty wenches! At that tale A tempest of fierce laughter rolled around The foc'sle; but one boy from London town, A pale-faced prentice, run-away to sea, Asking why Drake had bidden them pack so soon, Tom Moone turned to him with his deep-sea growl. "Because our Captain is no pink-eyed boy Nor soft-limbed Spaniard, but a staunch-souled Man, Full-blooded; nerved like iron; with a girl He loves at home in Devon; and a mind For ever bent upon some mighty goal, I know not what-but 'tis enough for me To know my Captain knows." And then he told

How sometimes o'er the gorgeous forest gloom Some marble city, rich, mysterious, white, An ancient treasure-house of Aztec kings. Or palace of forgotten Ineas gleamed: And in their dim rich lofty cellars gold, Beyond all wildest dreams, great bars of gold. Like pillars, tossed in mighty chaos, gold And precious stones, agate and emerald, Diamond, sapphire, ruby, and sardonyx. So said he, as they waited the return Of Doughty, resting in the foc'sle gloom. Or idly couched about the sun-swept decks On sails or coils of rope, while overhead Some boy would climb the rigging and look out. Arching his hand to see if Doughty came. But when he came, he came with a strange face Of feigned despair: and with a stammering tongue He vowed he could not find those poor supplies Which Drake himself in other days had found Upon that self-same island. But, perchance, This was a barren year, he said. And Drake Looked at him, suddenly, and at the musketeers. Their eyes were strained; their faces wore a cloud. That night he said no more; but on the morn, Mistrusting nothing, Drake with subtle sense Of weather-wisdom, through that little fleet Distributed his crews anew. And all The prisoners and the prizes at those isles They left behind them, taking what they would From out their carven cabins,—glimmering silks, Chiselled Toledo blades, and broad doubloons. And lo, as they weighed anchor, far away Behind them on the blue horizon line It seemed a city of towering masts arose; And from the crow's nest of the Golden Hunde A seaman cried, "By God; the hunt is up!" And like a tide of triumph through their yeins The red rejoicing blood began to race As there they saw the avenging ships of Spain, Eight mighty galleons, nosing out their trail. And Drake growled,"Oh, my lads of Bideford,

It cuts my heart to show the hounds our heels: But we must not emperil our great quest! Such fights as that must wait—as our reward When we return. Yet I will not put on One stitch of sail. So, lest they are not too slow To catch us, clear the decks. God, I would like To fight them!" So the little fleet advanced With decks all cleared and shotted guns and men Bare-armed beside them, hungering to be caught, And quite distracted from their former doubts; For danger, in that kind, they never feared. But soon the heavy Spaniards dropped behind; And not in vain had Thomas Doughty sown The seeds of doubt: for many a brow grew black With sullen-seeming care that erst was gay. But happily and in good time there came. Not from behind them now, but right in front, On the first sun-down of their quest renewed. Just as the sea grew dark around their ships, A chance that loosed heart-gnawing doubt in deeds. For through a mighty zone of golden haze Blotting the purple of the gathering night A galleon like a floating mountain moved To meet them, clad with sunset and with dreams. Her masts and spars immense in jewelled mist Shimmered: her rigging, like an emerald web Of golden spiders, tangled half the stars! Embodied sunset, dragging the soft sky O'er dazzled ocean, through the night she drew Out of the unknown lands; and round a prow That jutted like a moving promontory Over a cloven wilderness of foam, Upon a lofty blazoned scroll her name San Salvador challenged obsequious isles Where'er she rode; who kneeling like dark slaves Before some great Sultàn must lavish forth From golden cornucopias, East and West, Red streams of rubies, cataracts of pearl. But, at a signal from their admiral, all Those five small ships lay silent in the gloom Which, just as if some god were on their side,

Covered them in the dark troughs of the waves, Letting her pass to leeward. On she came, Blazing with lights, a City of the Sea, Belted with crowding towers and clouds of sail, And round her bows a long-drawn thunder rolled Splendid with foam; but ere she passed them by Drake gave the word, and with one crimson flash Two hundred yards of black and hidden sea Leaped into sight between them as the roar Of twenty British cannon shattered the night. Then after her they drove, like black sea-wolves Behind some royal high-branched stag of ten, Hanging upon those bleeding foam-flecked flanks. Leaping, snarling, worrying, as they went In full flight down the wind; for those light ships Much speedier than their huge antagonist, Keeping to windward, worked their will with her. In vain she burnt wild lights and strove to scan The darkening deep. Her musketeers in vain Provoked the crackling night with random fires: In vain her broadside bellowings burst at large As if the Gates of Erebus unrolled. For ever and anon the deep-sea gloom From some new quarter, like a dragon's mouth Opened and belched forth crimson flames and tore Her sides as if with iron claws unseen; Till, all at once, rough voices close at hand Out of the darkness thundered, "Grapple her!" And, falling on their knees, the Spaniards knew The Dragon of that red Apocalypse. There with one awful cry, El Draque! El Draque! They east their weapons from them; for the moon Rose, eastward, and, against her rising, black Over the bloody bulwarks, Francis Drake, Grasping the great hilt of his naked sword, Towered for a moment to their startled eyes Through all the zenith like the King of Hell. Then he leaped down upon their shining decks, And after him swarmed and towered and leapt in haste A brawny band of three score Englishmen, Gigantic as they loomed against the sky

286 Drake

And risen, it seemed, by miracle from the sea, So small were those five ships below the walls Of that huge floating mountain. Royally Drake, from the swart commander's trembling hands Took the surrendered sword, and bade his men Gather the fallen weapons on an heap. And placed a guard about them, while the moon Silvering the rolling seas for many a mile Glanced on the huddled Spaniards' rich attire, As like one picture of despair they grouped Under the splintered main-mast's creaking shrouds. And the great swinging shadows of the sails Mysteriously swept the gleaming decks; Where many a butt of useless cannon gloomed Along the accoutred bulwarks or upturned, As the ship wallowed in the heaving deep, Dumb mouths of empty menace to the stars.

Then Drake appointed Doughty, with a guard, To sail the prize on to the next dim isle Where they might leave her, taking aught they would From out her carven cabins and rich holds. And Doughty's heart leaped in him as he thought. "I have my chance at last"; but Drake, who still Trusted the man, made surety doubly sure, And in his wary weather-wisdom sent —Even as a breathing type of friendship, sent— His brother, Thomas Drake, aboard the prize: But set his brother, his own flesh and blood, Beneath the man, as if to say, "I give My loyal friend dominion over me." So courteously he dealt with him; but he, Seeing his chance once more slipping away. Raged inwardly and, from his own false heart Imputing his own evil, he contrived A cunning charge that night; and when they came Next day, at noon, upon the destined isle, He suddenly spat the secret venom forth. With such fierce wrath in his defeated soul That he himself almost believed the charge.

For when Drake stepped on the San Salvador
To order all things duly about the prize,
What booty they must keep and what let go,
Doughty received him with a blustering voice
Of red mock-righteous wrath, "Is this the way
Englishmen play the pirate, Francis Drake?
While thou wast dreaming of thy hero's crown—
God save the mark!—thy brother, nay, thy spy,
Must play the common pilferer, must convert
The cargo to his uses, rob us all
Of what we risked our necks to win: he wears
The ransom of an emperor round his throat
That might enrich us all. Who saw him wear
That chain of rubies ere last night?"

And Drake,

"Answer him, brother;" and his brother smiled And answered, "Nay, I never wore this chain Before last night; but Doughtv knows, indeed, For he was with me-and none else was there But Doughty-'tis my word against his word, That close on midnight we were summoned down To an English seaman who lay dying below Unknown to any of us, a prisoner In chains, that had been captured none knew where, For all his mind was far from Darien, And wandering evermore through Devon lanes At home: whom we released: and from his waist He took this hidden chain and gave it me, Begging me that if ever I returned To Bideford in Devon I would go With whatsoever wealth it might produce To his old mother who, with wrinkled hands In some small white-washed cottage o'er the sea, Where wall-flowers bloom in April, even now Is turning pages of the well-worn Book And praying for her son's return, nor knows That he lies cold upon the heaving main. But this he asked: and this in all good faith I swore to do; and even now he died, And hurrying hither from his side I clasped His chain of rubies round my neck awhile,

In full sight of the sun. I have no more To say." Then up spoke Hatton's trumpeter: "But I have more to say. Last night I saw Doughty, but not in full sight of the sun. Nor once, nor twice, but three times at the least, Carrying chains of gold, clusters of gems, And whatsoever wealth he could convey Into his cabin and smuggle in smallest space." "Nav." Doughty stammered, mixing sneer and lie. Yet bolstering up his courage with the thought That being what courtiers called a gentleman He ranked above the rude sea-discipline. "Nay, they were free gifts from the Spanish crew Because I treated them with courtesv." Then bluff Will Harvest, "That perchance were true, For he hath been close closeted for hours With their chief officers, drinking their health In our own war-bought wine, while down below Their captured English seaman groaned his last." Then Drake, whose utter silence, with a sense Of infinite power and justice, ruled their hearts, Suddenly thundered—and the traitor blanched And quailed before him. "This my flesh and blood I placed beneath thee as my dearer self! But thou, in trampling on him, shalt not say I charged thy brother. Nay, thou chargest me! Against me only hast thou stirred this strife; And now, by God, shalt thou learn, once for all, That I, thy captain for this youage, hold The supreme power of judgment in my hands. Get thee aboard my flagship! When I come I shall have more to say to thee; but thou, My brother, take this galleon in thy charge: For, as I see, she holdeth all the stores Which Doughty failed to find. She shall return With us to that New World from which she came. But now let these our prisoners all embark In yonder pinnace; let them all go free. I care not to be cumbered on my way Through dead Magellan's unattempted dream With chains and prisoners. In that Golden World

Which means much more to me than I can speak. Much more, much more than I can speak or breathe. Being, behind whatever name it bears— Earthly Paradise, Island of the Saints, Cathay, or Zipangu, or Hy Brasil-The eternal symbol of my soul's desire, A sacred country shining on the sea, That Vision without which, the wise king said, A people perishes; in that place of hope, That Tirn'an Og, that land of lasting youth, Where whosoever sails with me shall drink Fountains of immortality and dwell Beyond the fear of death for evermore, There shall we see the dust of battle dance Everywhere in the sunbeam of God's peace! Oh, in the new Atlantis of my soul There are no captives: there the wind blows free; And, as in sleep, I have heard the marching song Of mighty peoples rising in the West, Wonderful cities that shall set their foot Upon the throat of all old tyrannies: And on the West wind I have heard a cry, The shoreless cry of the prophetic sea Heralding through that golden wilderness The Soul whose path our task is to make straight. Freedom, the last great Saviour of mankind. I know not what I know: these are wild words. Which, as the sun draws out earth's morning mists Over dim fields where careless cattle sleep. Some visionary Light, unknown, afar, Draws from my darkling soul. Why should we drag Thither this Old-World weight of utter gloom, Or with the ballast of these heavy hearts Make sail in sorrow for Pacific Seas? Let us leave chains and prisoners to Spain: But set these free to make their own way home!" So said he, groping blindly towards the truth. And heavy with the treason of his friend. His face was like a king's face as he spake. For sorrows that strike deep reveal the deep: And through the gateways of a ragged wound

Sometimes a god will drive his chariot wheels From some deep heaven within the hearts of men. Nevertheless, the immediate seamen there Knowing how great a ransom they might ask For some among their prisoners, men of wealth And high degree, scarce liked to free them thus: And only saw in Drake's conflicting moods The moment's whim. "For little will he care." They muttered, "when we reach those fabled shores. Whether his cannon break their golden peace." Yet to his face they murmured not at all: Because his eyes compelled them like a law. So there they freed the prisoners and set sail Across the earth-shaking shoulders of the broad Atlantic, and the great grev slumbrous waves Triumphantly swelled up to meet the keels.

BOOK III

Now in the cabin of the Golden Hunde At dusk, Drake sent for Doughty. From one wall The picture of his love looked down on him; And on the table lay the magic chart. Drawn on a buffalo horn, all small peaked isles, Dwarf promontories, tiny twisted creeks, And fairy harbours under elfin hills. With marvellous inscriptions lined in red,— As Here is Gold, or Many Rubies Here, Or Ware Witch-crafte, or Here is Cannibals. For in his great simplicity the man Delighted in it, with the adventurous heart Of boyhood poring o'er some well-thumbed tale On blue Twelfth Night beside the crimson fire: And o'er him, like a vision of a boy In his first knighthood when, upon some hill Washed by the silver fringes of the sea, Amidst the purple heather he lies and reads Of Arthur and Avilion, like a star His love's pure face looked down. There Doughty came.

Half fearful, half defiant, with a crowd Of jostling half-excuses on his lips, And one dark swarm of adders in his heart. For now what light of chivalry remained In Doughty's mind was thickening with a plot, Subtler and deadlier than the serpent's first. Attempt on our first sire in Eden bower. Drake, with a countenance open as the sun, Received him, saying: "Forgive me, friend, for I Was hasty with thee. I well nigh forgot Those large and liberal nights we two have passed In this old cabin, telling all our dreams And hopes, in friendship, o'er and o'er again. But Vicary, thy friend hath talked with me, And now-I understand. Thou shalt no more Be vexed with a divided mastership. Indeed, I trust thee, Doughty. Wilt thou not Be friends with me? For now in ample proof Thou shalt take charge of this my Golden Hynde In all things, save of seamanship, which rests With the ship's master under my command. But I myself will sail upon the prize." And with the word he gathered up the chart, Took down his lady's picture with a smile, Gripped Doughty's hand and left him, staring, sheer Bewildered with that magnanimity Of faith, throughout all shadows, in some light Unseen behind the shadows. Thus did Drake Give up his own fair cabin which he loved; Being, it seemed, a little travelling home, Fragrant with memories,—gave it, as he thought, In recompense to one whom he had wronged. For even as his mind must ever yearn To shores beyond the sunset, even so He yearned through all dark shadows to his friend, And with his greater nature striving still To comprehend the lesser, as the sky Embraces our low earth, he would adduce Justifications, thus: "These men of law Are trained to plead for any and every cause. To feign an indignation, or to prove

The worse is better and that black is white! Small wonder that their passion goes astray: There is one prayer, one prayer for all of us—Enter not into judgment with Thy servant!"

Yet as his boat pulled tow'rd the Spanish prize Leaving the Golden Hynde, far off he heard A voice that chilled him, as the voice of Fate Crying like some old Bellman through the world.

SONG

Yes; oh, yes; if any seek
Laughter flown or lost delight,
Glancing eye or rosy cheek,
Love shall claim his own to-night!
Say, hath any lost a friend?
Yes; oh, yes!
Let his distress
In my ditty find its end.

Yes; oh, yes; here all is found!
Kingly palaces await
Each its rightful owner, crowned
King and consecrate,
Under the wet and wintry ground!
Yes; oh, yes!
There sure redress
Lies where all is lost and found.

And Doughty, though Drake's deed of kindness flashed A moment's kind contrition through his heart, Immediately, with all his lawyer's wit True to the cause that hired him, laughed it by, And straight began to weave the treacherous web Of soft intrigue wherein he meant to snare The passions of his comrades. Night and day, As that small fleet drove onward o'er the deep, Cleaving the sunset with their bright black prows Or hunted by the red pursuing Dawn,

93

He stirred between the high-born gentlemen (Whose white and jewelled hands, gallant in fight, And hearts remembering Crécy and Poictiers, Were of scant use in common seamanship), Between these and the men whose rough tarred arms Were good at equal need in storm or war Yet took a poorer portion of the prize, He stirred a subtle jealousy and fanned A fire that swiftly grew almost to hate. For when the seamen must take precedence Of loiterers on the deck—through half a word, Small, with intense device, like some fierce lens, He magnified their rude and blustering mode; Or urged some scented fop, whose idle brain Busied itself with momentary whims, To bid the master alter here a sail, Or there a rope: and, if the man refused, Doughty, at night, across the wine-cups, raved Against the rising insolence of the mob: And hinted Drake himself was half to blame, In words that seemed to say, "I am his friend, Or I should bid you think him all to blame." So fierce indeed the strife became that once, While Chester, Doughty's catspaw, played with fire, The grim ship-master growled between his teeth, "Remember, sir, remember, ere too late, Magellan's mutinous vice-admiral's end." And Doughty heard, and with a boisterous laugh Slapped the old sea-dog on the back and said, "The gallows are for dogs, not gentlemen!" Meanwhile his brother, sly John Doughty, sought To fan the seamen's fear of the unknown world With whispers and conjectures; and, at night, He brought old books of Greek and Hebrew down Into the foc'sle, claiming by their aid A knowledge of Black Art, and power to tell The future, which he dreadfully displayed There in the flickering light of the oily lamp, Bending above their huge and swarthy palms And tracing them to many a grisly doom.

294 Drake

So many a night and day westward they plunged. The half-moon ripened to its mellow round, Dwindled again and ripened yet again. And there was nought around them but the grey Ruin and roar of huge Atlantic seas. And only like a memory of the world They left behind them rose the same great sun, And daily rolled his chariot through their sky, Whereof the skilled musicians made a song.

SONG

The same sun is o'er us,

The same Love shall find us,

The same and none other,

Wherever we be;

With the same goal before us,

The same home behind us,

England, our mother,

Ringed round with the sea.

When the breakers charged thundering
In thousands all round us
With a lightning of lances
Uphurtled on high,
When the stout ships were sundering
A rapture hath crowned us,
Like the wild light that dances
On the crests that flash by.

When the waters lay breathless
Gazing at Hesper
Guarding the golden
Fruit of the tree,
Heard we the deathless
Wonderful whisper
Wafting the olden
Dream of the sea.

No land in the ring of it

Now, all around us

Only the splendid

Resurging unknown!

How should we sing of it?—

This that hath found us

By the great sun attended

In splendour, alone.

Ah! the broad miles of it,
White with the onset
Of waves without number
Warring for glee.
Ah₁ the soft smiles of it
Down to the sunset,
Holy for slumber,
The peace of the sea.

The wave's heart, exalted,
Leaps forward to meet us,
The sun on the sea-wave
Lies white as the moon:
The soft sapphire-vaulted
Deep heaven smiles to greet us,
Free sons of the free-wave
All singing one tune.

The same sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other,
Wherever we be;
With the same goal before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Queen of the sea.

At last a faint-flushed April Dawn arose With milk-white arms up-binding golden clouds Of fragrant hair behind her lovely head; And lo, before the bright black plunging prows The whole sea suddenly shattered into shoals 296 Drake

Of rolling porpoises. Everywhere they tore The glittering water. Like a moving crowd Of black bright rocks washed smooth by foaming tides. They thrilled the unconscious fancy of the crews With subtle, wild, and living hints of land. And soon Columbus' happy signals came. The signs that saved him when his mutineers Despaired at last and clamoured to return.— And there, with awe triumphant in their eyes, They saw, lazily tossing on the tide. A drift of seaweed and a berried branch, Which silenced them as if they had seen a Hand Writing with fiery letters on the deep. Then a black cormorant, vulture of the sea, With neck outstretched and one long ominous honk, Went hurtling past them to its unknown bourne. A mighty white-winged albatross came next; Then flight on flight of clamorous clanging gulls: And last, a wild and sudden shout of "Land!" Echoed from crew to crew across the waves. Then, dumb upon the rigging as they hung Staring at it, a menace chilled their blood. For like Il Gran Nemico of Dante, dark, Av. coloured like a thunder-cloud, from North To South, in front, there slowly rose to sight A country like a dragon fast asleep Along the West, with wrinkled, purple wings Ending in ragged forests o'er its spine; And with great craggy claws out-thrust, that turned (As the dim distances dissolved their veils) To promontories bounding a huge bay. There o'er the hushed and ever shallower tide The staring ships drew nigh and thought, "Is this The Dragon of our Golden Apple Tree, The guardian of the fruit of our desire Which grows in gardens of the Hesperides Where those three sisters weave a white-armed dance Around it everlastingly, and sing Strange songs in a strange tongue that still convey Warning to heedful souls?" Nearer they drew, And now, indeed, from out a soft blue-grey

Mingling of colours on that coast's deep flank There crept a garden of enchantment, height O'er height, a garden sloping from the hills, Wooded as with Aladdin's trees that bore All-coloured clustering gems instead of fruit; Now vaster as it grew upon their eyes. And like some Roman amphitheatre Cirque above mighty cirque all round the bay. With jewels and flowers ablaze on women's breasts Innumerably confounded and confused: While lovely faces flushed with lust of blood. Rank above rank upon their tawny thrones In soft barbaric splendour lapped, and lulled By the low thunderings of a thousand lions. Luxuriously smiled as they bent down Over the searlet-splashed and steaming sands To watch the white-limbed gladiators die.

Such fears and dreams for Francis Drake, at least, Rose and dissolved in his nigh fevered brain As they drew near that equatorial shore; For rumours had been borne to him; and now He knew not whether to impute the wrong To his untrustful mind or to believe Doughty a traitorous liar; yet there seemed Proof and to spare. A thousand shadows rose To mock him with their veiled indicative hands. And each alone he laid and exorcised But for each doubt he banished, one returned From darker depths to mock him o'er again.

So, in that bay, the little fleet sank sail
And anchored; and the wild reality
Behind those dreams towered round them on the hills,
Or so it seemed. And Drake bade lower a boat,
And went ashore with sixteen men to seek
Water; and, as they neared the embowered beach,
Over the green translucent tide there came,
A hundred yards from land, a drowsy sound
Immeasurably repeated and prolonged,

298 Drake

As of innumerable elfin drums Dreamily mustering in the tropic bloom. This from without they heard, across the waves: But when they glided into a flowery creek Under the sharp black shadows of the trees-Jaca and Mango and Palm and red festoons Of garlanded Liana wreaths—it ebbed Into the murmur of the mighty fronds, Prodigious leaves whose veinings bore the fresh Impression of the finger-prints of God. There humming-birds, like flakes of purple fire Upon some passing seraph's plumage, beat And quivered in blinding blots of golden light Between the embattled cactus and cardoon; While one huge whisper of primeval awe Seemed to await the cool green eventide When God should walk His Garden as of old.

Now as the boats were plying to and fro Between the ships and that enchanted shore, Drake bade his comrades tarry a little and went Apart, alone, into the trackless woods. Tormented with his thoughts, he saw all round Once more the battling image of his mind, Where there was nought of man, only the vast Unending silent struggle of Titan trees. Large internecine twistings of the world, The hushed death-grapple and the still intense Locked anguish of Laocoons that gripped Death by the throat for thrice three hundred years. Once, like a subtle mockery overhead, Some black-armed chattering ape swung swiftly by, But he strode onward, thinking-"Was it false, False all that kind outreaching of the hands? False? Was there nothing certain, nothing sure In those divinest aisles and towers of Time Wherein we took sweet counsel? Is there nought Sure but the solid dust beneath our feet? Must all those lovelier fabrics of the soul, Being so divinely bright and delicate, Waver and shine no longer than some poor

Prismatic aery bubble? Ay, they burst,
And all their glory shrinks into one tear
No bitterer than some idle love-lorn maid
Sheds for her dead canary. God, it hurts,
This, this hurts most, to think how we must miss
What might have been, for nothing but a breath,
A babbling of the tongue, an argument,
Or such a poor contention as involves
The thrones and dominations of this earth,—
How many of us, like seed on barren ground,
Must miss the flower and harvest of their prayers,
The living light of friendship and the grasp
Which for its very meaning once implied
Eternities of utterance and the life
Immortal of two souls beyond the grave?"

Now, wandering upward ever, he reached and clomb
The slope side of a fern-fringed precipice,
And, at the summit, found an opening glade,
Whence, looking o'er the forest, he beheld
The sea; and, in the land-locked bay below,
Far, far below, his elfin-tiny ships,
All six at anchor on the crawling tide!
Then onward, upward, through the woods once more
He plunged with bursting heart and burning brow;
And, once again, like madness, the black shapes
Of doubt swung through his brain and chattered and
laughed,

Till he upstretched his arms in agony
And cursed the name of Doughty, cursed the day
They met, cursed his false face and courtier smiles,
"For oh," he cried, "how easy a thing it were
For truth to wear the garb of truth! This proves
His treachery!" And there, at once, his thoughts
Tore him another way, as thus, "And yet
If he were false, is he not subtle enough
To hide it? Why, this proves his innocence—
This very courtly carelessness which I,
Black-hearted evil-thinker as I am,
In my own clumsier spirit so misjudge!
These children of the court are butterflies

Fluttering hither and thither, and I—poor fool—Would fix them to a stem and call them flowers, Nay, bid them grasp the ground like towering oaks And shadow all the zenith;" and yet again The madness of distrustful friendship gleamed From his fierce eyes, "Oh villain, damnèd villain, God's murrain on his heart! I know full well He hides what he can hide! He wears no fault Upon the gloss and frippery of his breast! It is not that! It is the hidden things, Unseizable, the things I do not know, Ay, it is these, these, these and these alone That I mistrust."

And, as he walked, the skies Grew full of threats, and now enormous clouds Rose mammoth-like above the ensanguined deep, Trampling the daylight out; and, with its death Dyed purple, rushed along as if they meant To obliterate the world. He took no heed. Though that strange blackness brimmed the branching aisles With horror, he strode on till in the gloom, Just as his winding way came out once more Over a precipice that o'erlooked the bay. There, as he went, not gazing down, but up. He saw what seemed a ponderous granite cliff. A huge ribbed shell upon a lonely shore Left by forgotten mountains when they sank Back to earth's breast like billows on a sea. A tall and whispering crowd of tree-ferns waved Mysterious fringes round it. In their midst He flung himself at its broad base, with one Sharp shivering cry of pain, "Show me Thy ways, O God, teach me Thy paths! I am in the dark! Lighten my darkness!"

Almost as he spoke
There swept across the forest, far and wide,
Gathering power and volume as it came,
A sound as of a rushing mighty wind;
And, overhead, like great black gouts of blood
Wrung from the awful forehead of the Night
The first drops fell and ceased. Then, suddenly,

Out of the darkness, earth with all her seas. Her little ships at anchor in the bay (Five ebony ships upon a sheet of silver, Drake saw not that, indeed, Drake saw not that!). Her woods, her boughs, her leaves, her tiniest twigs. Leapt like a hunted stag through one immense Lightning of revelation into the murk Of Erebus: then heaven o'er rending heaven Shattered and crashed down ruin over the world. But, in that deeper darkness, Francis Drake Stood upright now, and with blind outstretched arms Groped at that strange forgotten cliff and shell Of mystery: for in that flash of light Æons had passed; and now the Thing in front Made his blood freeze with memories that lay Behind his Memory. In the gloom he groped. And with dark hands that knew not what they knew. As one that shelters in the night, unknowing, Beneath a stranded shipwreck, with a cry He touched the enormous rain-washed belted ribs And bones like battlements of some Mastodon Embedded there until the trump of doom.

After long years, long centuries, perchance. Triumphantly some other pioneer Would stand where Drake now stood and read the tale Of ages where he only felt the cold Touch in the dark of some huge mystery; Yet Drake might still be nearer to the light Who now was whispering from his great deep heart, "Show me Thy ways, O God, teach me Thy paths!" And there by some strange instinct, oh, he felt God's answer there, as if he grasped a hand Across a gulf of twice ten thousand years; And he regained his lost magnificence Of faith in that great Harmony which resolves Our discords, faith through all the ruthless laws Of nature in their lovely pitilessness, Faith in that Love which outwardly must wear. Through all the sorrows of eternal change, The splendour of the indifference of God.

All round him through the heavy purple gloom
Sloped the soft rush of silver-arrowed rain,
Loosening the skies' hard anguish as with tears.
Once more he felt his unity with all
The vast composure of the universe,
And drank deep at the fountains of that peace
Which comprehends the tumult of our days.
But with that peace the power to act returned;
And, with his back against the Mastodon,
He stared through the great darkness tow'rds the sea.
The rain ceased for a moment: only the slow
Drip of the dim droop-feathered palms all round
Deepened the hush.

Then, out of the gloom once more
The whole earth leapt to sight with all her woods,
Her boughs, her leaves, her tiniest twigs distinct
For one wild moment; but Drake only saw
The white flash of her seas and there, oh there
That land-locked bay with those five elfin ships,
Five elfin ebony ships upon a sheet
Of wrinkled silver! Then, as the thunder followed,
One thought burst through his brain—

One ship was gone!

Over the grim precipitous edge he hung, An eagle waiting for the lightning now To swoop upon his prey. One iron hand Gripped a rough tree-root like a bunch of snakes: And, as the rain rushed round him, far away He saw to northward yet another flash, A scribble of God's finger in the sky Over a waste of white stampeding waves. His eye flashed like a falchion as he saw it, And from his lips there burst the sea-king's laugh; For there, with a fierce joy he knew, he knew Doughty, at last—an open mutineer! An open foe to fight! Ay, there she went,-His Golden Hynde, his little Golden Hynde A wild deserter scudding to the North. And, almost ere the lightning, Drake had gone Crashing down the face of the precipice, By a narrow water-gully, and through the huge

Forest he tore the straight and perilous way Down to the shore; while, three miles to the North. Upon the wet poop of the Golden Hynde Doughty stood smiling. Scarce would he have smiled Knowing that Drake had seen him from that tower Amidst the thunders; but, indeed, he thought He had escaped unseen amidst the storm. Many a day he had worked upon the crew. Fanning their fears and doubts until he won The more part to his side. And when they reached That coast, he showed them how Drake meant to sail Southward, into that unknown Void; but he Would have them suddenly slip by stealth away Northward to Darien, showing them what a life Of roystering glory waited for them there, If, laying aside this empty quest, they joined The merry feasters round those island fires Which over many a dark-blue creek illumed Buceaneer camps in searlet logwood groves, Fringing the Guf of Mexico, till dawn Summoned the Black Flags out to sweep the sea.

But when Drake reached the flower-embowered boat And found the men awaiting his return There; in a sheltering grove of bread-fruit trees Beneath great eaves of leafage that obscured Their sight, but kept the storm out, as they tossed Pieces of eight or rattled the bone dice. His voice went through them like a thunderbolt, For none of them had seen the Golden Hynde Steal from the bay; and now the billows burst Like cannon down the coast; and they had thought Their boat could not be launched until the storm Abated. Under Drake's compelling eyes, Nevertheless, they poled her down the creek Without one word, waiting their chance. Then all Together with their brandished oars they thrust, And on the fierce white out-draught of a wave They shot up, up and over the toppling crest Of the next, and plunged crashing into the trough Behind it: then they settled at their thwarts.

And the fierce water boiled before their blades As, with Drake's iron hand upon the helm, They soared and crashed across the rolling seas.

Not for the Spanish prize did Drake now steer, But for that little ship the Marygold, Swiftest of sail, next to the Golden Hynde, And, in the hands of Francis Drake, indeed Swiftest of all; and ere the seamen knew What power, as of a wind, bore them along, Anchor was up, their hands were on the sheets, The sails were broken out, the Marygold Was flying like a storm-cloud to the North, And on her poop an iron statue still As death stood Francis Drake.

One hour they rushed Northward, with green seas washing o'er the deck And buffeted with splendour: then they saw The Golden Hunde like some wing-broken gull With torn mismanaged plumes beating the air In peril of utter shipwreck; saw her fly Half-mast, a feeble signal of distress Despite all Doughty's curses: for her crew Wild with divisions torn amongst themselves Most gladly now surrendered in their hearts, As close alongside grandly onward swept The Marygold, with canvas trim and taut Magnificently drawing the full wind, Her gunners waiting at their loaded guns Bare-armed and silent; and that iron soul Alone, upon her silent quarter-deck. There they hauled up into the wind and lay Rocking, while Drake, alone, without a guard, Boarding the runaway, dismissed his boat Back to the Marygold. Then his voice out-rang Trumpet-like o'er the trembling mutineers, And clearly, as if they were but busied still About the day's routine. They hid their shame, As men that would propitiate a god, By flying to fulfil his lightest word;

And ere they knew what power, as of a wind, Impelled them—that half wreck was trim and taut, Her sails all drawing and her bows afoam; And, creeping past the Marygold once more, She led their Southward way! And not till then Did Drake vouchsafe one word to the white face Of Doughty, as he furtively slunk nigh With some new lie upon his fear-parched lips Thirsting for utterance in his cracking laugh Of deprecation; and with one ruffling puff Of pigeon courage in his blinded soul—"I am no sea-dog—even Francis Drake Would scarce misuse a gentleman."

Then Drake turned And summoned four swart seamen out by name. His words went like a cold wind through their flesh As with a passionless voice he slowly said, "Take ve this fellow: bind him to the mast Until what time I shall decide his fate." And Doughty gasped as at the world's blank end,— "Nay, Francis," cried he, "wilt thou thus misuse A gentleman?" But as the seamen gripped His arms he struggled vainly and furiously To throw them off: and in his impotence Let slip the whole of his treacherous cause and hope In empty wrath,—"Fore God," he foamed and snarled, "Ye shall all smart for this when we return! Unhand me, dogs! I have Lord Burleigh's power Behind me. There is nothing I have done Without his warrant! Ye shall smart for this! Unhand me, I say, unhand me!"

And in one flash Drake saw the truth, and Doughty saw his eyes Lighten upon him; and his false heart quailed Once more; and he suddenly suffered himself Quietly, strangely, to be led away And bound without a murmur to the mast. And strangely Drake remembered, as those words, "Ye shall all smart for this when we return," Yelped at his faith, how while the Dover cliffs Faded from sight he leaned to his new friend

Doughty and said: "I blame them not who stay! I blame them not at all who cling to home, For many of us, indeed, shall not return, Nor ever know that sweetness any more."

And when they had reached their anchorage anew, Drake, having now resolved to bring his fleet Beneath a more compact control, at once Took all the men and the chief guns and stores From out the Spanish prize; and sent Tom Moone To set the hulk afire. Also he bade Unbind the traitor and ordered him aboard The pinnace Christopher. John Doughty, too, He ordered thither, into the grim charge Of old Tom Moone, thinking it best to keep The poisonous leaven carefully apart Until they had won well Southward, to a place Where, finally committed to their quest, They might arraign the traitor without fear Or favour, and acquit him or condemn. But those two brothers, doubting as the false Are damned to doubt, saw murder in his eyes, And thought "He means to sink the smack one night." And they refused to go, till Drake abruptly Ordered them straightway to be slung on board With ropes.

The daylight waned; but ere the sun Sank, the five ships were plunging to the South; For Drake would halt no longer, least the crews Also should halt betwixt two purposes. He took the tide of fortune at the flood; And onward through the now subsiding storm, Ere they could think what power as of a wind Impelled them, he had swept them on their way. Far, far into the night they saw the blaze That leapt in crimson o'er the abandoned hulk Behind them, like a mighty hecatomb Marking the path of some Titanic will. Many a night and day they Southward drove. Sometimes at midnight round them all the sea Quivered with witches' oils and water snakes,

Green, blue, and red, with lambent tongues of fire. Mile upon mile about the blurred black hulls A cauldron of tempestuous colour coiled. On every mast mysterious meteors burned. And from the shores a bellowing rose and fell As of great bestial gods that walked all night Through some wild hell unknown, too vast for men: But when the silver and crimson of the dawn Broke out, they saw the tropic shores anew, The fair white foam, and, round about the rocks, Weird troops of tusked sea-lions; and the world Mixed with their dreams and made them stranger still. And, once, so fierce a tempest scattered the fleet That even the hardiest souls began to think There was a Jonah with them; for the seas Rose round them like green mountains, peaked and rigged With heights of Alpine snow amongst the clouds; And many a league to Southward, when the ships Gathered again amidst the sinking waves Four only met. The ship of Thomas Drake Was missing: and some thought it had gone down With all hands in the storm. But Francis Drake Held on his way, learning from hour to hour To merge himself in immortality: Learning the secrets of those pitiless laws Which dwarf all mortal grief, all human pain, To something less than nothing by the side Of that eternal travail dimly guessed. Since first he felt in the miraculous dark The great bones of the Mastodon, that hulk Of immemorial death. He learned to judge The passing pageant of this outward world As by the touch-stone of that memory; Even as in that country which some said Lay now not far, the great Tezeucan king, Resting his jewelled hand upon a skull, And on a smouldering glory of jewels throned There in his temple of the Unknown God Over the host of Aztee princes, clad In golden hauberks gleaming under soft Surcoats of green or scarlet feather-work,

Could in the presence of a mightier power Than life or death give up his guilty sons. His only sons, to the sacrificial sword. And hour by hour the soul of Francis Drake, Unconscious as an oak-tree of its growth. Increased in strength and stature as he drew Earth, heaven, and hell within him, more and more. For as the dream we call our world, with all Its hues is but a picture in the brain. So did his soul enfold the universe With gradual sense of superhuman power, While every visible shape within the vast Horizon seemed the symbol of some thought Waiting for utterance. He had found indeed God's own Nirvana, not of empty dream, But of intensest life. Nor did he think Aught of all this; but, as the rustic deems The colours that he carries in his brain Are somehow all outside him while he peers Unaltered through two windows in his face, Drake only knew that as the four ships plunged Southward, the world mysteriously grew More like a prophet's vision, hour by hour. Fraught with dark omens and significances. A world of hieroglyphs and sacred signs Wherein he seemed to read the truth that lay Hid from the Roman augurs when of old They told the future from the flight of birds. How vivid with disaster seemed the flight Of those blood-red flamingoes o'er the dim Blue steaming forest, like two terrible thoughts Flashing, unapprehended, through his brain!

And now, as they drove Southward, day and night, Through storm and calm, the shores that fleeted by Grew wilder, grander, with his growing soul, And pregnant with the approaching mystery. And now along the Patagonian coast They cruised, and in the solemn midnight saw Wildernesses of shaggy barren marl, Petrified seas of lava, league on league,

Craters and bouldered slopes and granite cliffs With ragged rents, grim gorges, deep ravines, And precipice on precipice up-piled Innumerable to those dim distances Where, over valleys hanging in the clouds, Gigantic mountains and volcanic peaks Catching the wefts of cirrus fleece appeared To smoke against the sky, though all was now Dead as that frozen chaos of the moon, Or some huge passion of a slaughtered soul Prostrate under the marching of the stars.

At last, and in a silver dawn, they came Suddenly on a broad-winged estuary. And, in the midst of it, an island lay, There they found shelter, on its leeward side, And Drake convened upon the Golden Hynde His dread court-martial. Two long hours he heard Defence and accusation, then broke up The conclave, and, with burning heart and brain, Feverishly seeking everywhere some sign To guide him, went ashore upon that isle, And lo, turning a rugged point of rock, He rubbed his eyes to find out if he dreamed, For there—a Crusoe's wonder, a miracle, A sign-before him stood on that lone strand Stark, with a stern arm pointing out his way And jangling still one withered skeleton, The grim black gallows where Magellan hanged His mutineers. Its base was white with bones Picked by the gulls, and crumbling o'er the sand A dread sea-salt, dry from the tides of time. There, on that lonely shore, Death's finger-post Stood like some old forgotten truth made strange By the long lapse of many memories, All starting up in resurrection now As at the trump of doom, heroic ghosts Out of the cells and graves of his deep brain Reproaching him. "Were this man not thy friend, Ere now he should have died the traitor's death. What wilt thou say to others if they, too,

Prove false? Or wilt thou slay the lesser and save The greater sinner? Nay, if thy right hand Offend thee, cut it off!" And, in one flash, Drake saw his path and chose it.

With a voice Low as the passionless anguished voice of Fate That comprehends all pain, but girds it round With iron, lest some random cry break out For man's misguidance, he drew all his men Around him, saying, "Ye all know how I loved Doughty, who hath betrayed me twice and thrice, For I still trusted him: he was no felon That I should turn my heart away from him. He is the type and image of man's laws: While I—am lawless as the soul that still Must sail and seek a world beyond the worlds. A law behind earth's laws. I dare not judge! But ye—who know the mighty goal we seek, Who have seen him sap our courage, hour by hour, Till God Himself almost appeared a dream Behind his technicalities and doubts Of aught he could not touch or handle; ye Who have seen him stir up jealousy and strife Between our seamen and our gentlemen, Even as the world stirs up continual strife, Bidding the man forget he is a man With God's own patent of nobility: Ye who have seen him strike this last sharp blow— Sharper than any enemy hath struck,— He whom I trusted, he alone could strike— So sharply, for indeed I loved this man. Judge ve—for see, I cannot. Do not doubt I loved this man! But now, if ye will let him have his life, Oh, speak! But, if ye think it must be death, Hold up your hands in silence!" His voice dropped. And eagerly he whispered forth one word Beyond the scope of Fate— "I would not have him die!" There was no sound Save the long thunder of eternal seas.— Drake bowed his head and waited.

Suddenly,

One man upheld his hand; then, all at once, A brawny forest of brown arms arose In silence, and the great sea whispered *Death*.

There, with one big swift impulse, Francis Drake Held out his right sun-blackened hand and gripped The hand that Doughty proffered him; and lo, Doughty laughed out and said, "Since I must die, Let us have one more hour of comradeship, One hour as old companions. Let us make A feast here, on this island, ere I go Where there is no more feasting." So they made A great and solemn banquet as the day Decreased; and Doughty bade them all unlock Their sea-chests and bring out their rich array. There, by that wondering ocean of the West, In crimson doublets, lined and slashed with gold. In broidered lace and double golden chains Embossed with rubies and great cloudy pearls They feasted, gentlemen adventurers, Drinking old malmsey, as the sun sank down.

Now Doughty, fronting the rich death of day. And flourishing a silver pouncet-box With many a courtly jest and rare conceit. There as he sat in rich attire, out-braved The rest. Though darker-hued, yet richer far. His murrey-coloured doublet double-piled Of Genoa velvet, puffed with ciprus, shone: For over its grave hues the gems that bossed His golden collar, wondrously relieved, Blazed lustrous to the West like stars. But Drake Was clad in black, with midnight silver slashed, And, at his side, a great two-handed sword. At last they rose, just as the sun's last rays Rested upon the heaving molten gold Immeasurable. The long slow sigh of the waves That creamed across the lonely time-worn reef All round the island seemed the very voice

Of the Everlasting: black against the sea The gallows of Magellan stretched its arm With the gaunt skeleton and its rusty chain Creaking and swinging in the solemn breath Of eventide like some strange pendulum Measuring out the moments that remained. There did they take the holy sacrament Of Jesus' body and blood. Then Doughty and Drake Kissed each other, as brothers, on the cheek; And Doughty knelt. And Drake, without one word, Leaning upon the two-edged naked sword Stood at his side, with iron lips, and eves Full of the sunset; while the doomed man bowed His head upon a rock. The great sun dropped Suddenly, and the land and sea were dark; And as it were a sign, Drake lifted up The gleaming sword. It seemed to sweep the heavens Down in its arc as he smote, once, and no more.

Then, for a moment, silence froze their veins, Till one fierce seamen stooped with a hoarse cry: And, like an eagle clutching up its prev. His arm swooped down and bore the head aloft. Gorily streaming, by the long dark hair; And a great shout went up, "So perish all Traitors to God and England." Then Drake turned And bade them to their ships; and, wondering, They left him. As the boats thrust out from shore Brave old Tom Moone looked back with faithful eyes Like a great mastiff to his master's face. He, looming larger from his loftier ground Clad with the slowly gathering night of stars And gazing seaward o'er his quiet dead. Seemed like some Titan bronze in grandeur based Unshakeable until the crash of doom Shatter the black foundations of the world.

BOOK IV

DAWN, everlasting and almighty Dawn, Hailed by ten thousand names of death and birth, Who, chiefly by thy name of Sorrow, seem'st To half the world a sunset, God's great Dawn, Fair light of all earth's partings till we meet Where dawn and sunset, mingling East and West, Shall make in some deep Orient of the soul One radiant Rose of Love for evermore: Teach me, oh teach to bear thy broadening light, Thy deepening wonder, lest as old dreams fade With love's unfaith, like wasted hours of youth, And dim illusions vanish in thy beam, Their rapture and their anguish break that heart Which loved them, and must love for ever now. Let thy great sphere of splendour, ring by ring For ever widening, draw new seas, new skies, Within my ken; yet, as I still must bear This love, help me to grow in spirit with thee. Dawn on my song which trembles like a cloud Pierced with thy beauty. Rise, shine, as of old Across the wondering ocean in the sight Of those world-wandering mariners, when earth Rolled flat up to the Gates of Paradise, And each slow mist that curled its gold away From each new sea they furrowed into pearl Might bring before their blinded mortal eyes God and the Glory. Lighten as on the soul Of him that all night long in torment dire. Anguish and thirst unceasing for thy ray Upon that lonely Patagonian shore Had lain as on the bitterest coasts of Hell. For all night long, mocked by the dreadful peace Of world-wide seas that darkly heaved and sank With cold recurrence, like the slow sad breath Of a fallen Titan dying all alone In lands beyond all human loneliness. While far and wide glimmers that broken targe Hurled from tremendous battle with the gods. And, as he breathes in pain, the chain-mail rings

Round his broad breast a muffled rattling make For many a league, so seemed the sound of waves Upon those beaches—there, be-mocked all night, Beneath Magellan's gallows. Drake had watched Beside his dead; and over him the stars Paled as the silver chariot of the moon Drove, and her white steeds ramped in a fury of foam On splendid peaks of cloud. The Golden Hynde Slept with those other shadows on the bay. Between him and his home the Atlantic heaved: And, on the darker side, across the strait Of starry sheen that softly rippled and flowed Betwixt the mainland and his isle, it seemed Death's Gates indeed burst open. The night vawned Like a foul wound. Black shapes of the outer dark Poured out of forests older than the world: And, just as reptiles that take form and hue, Speckle and blotch, in strange assimilation From thorn and scrub and stone and the waste earth Through which they crawl, so that almost they seem The incarnate spirits of their wilderness, Were these most horrible kindred of the night. Æonian glooms unfathomable, grim aisles. Grotesque, distorted boughs and dancing shades Out-belched their dusky brood on the dim shore; Monsters with sooty limbs, red-raddled eyes, And faces painted yellow, women and men; Fierce naked giants howling to the moon. And loathlier Gorgons with long snaky tresses Pouring vile purple over pendulous breasts Like wine-bags. On the mainland beach they lit A brushwood fire that reddened creek and cove And lapped their swarthy limbs with hideous tongues Of flame; so near that by their light Drake saw The blood upon the dead man's long black hair Clotting corruption. The fierce funeral pyre Of all things fair seemed rolling on that shore; And in that dull red battle of smoke and flame, While the sea crunched the pebbles, and dark drums Rumbled out of the gloom as if this earth Had some Titanic tigress for a soul

Purring in forests of Eternity Over her own grim dreams, his lonely spirit Passed through the circles of a world-wide waste Darker than ever Dante roamed. No gulf Was this of fierce harmonious reward, Where Evil moans in anguish after death. Where all men reap as they have sown, where gluttons Gorge upon toads and usurers gulp hot streams Of molten gold. This was that Malebolge Which hath no harmony to mortal ears, But seems the reeling and tremendous dream Of some omnipotent madman. There he saw The naked giants dragging to the flames Young captives hideous with a new despair: He saw great craggy blood-stained stones upheaved To slaughter, saw through mists of blood and fire The cannibal feast prepared, saw filthy hands Rend limb from limb, and almost dreamed he saw Foul mouths a-drip with quivering human flesh And horrible laughter in the crimson storm That clomb and leapt and stabbed at the high heaven Till the whole night seemed saturate with red.

And all night long upon the Golden Hynde, A cloud upon the waters, brave Tom Moone Watched o'er the bulwarks for some dusky plunge To warn him if that savage crew should mark His captain and swim over to his isle. Whistle in hand he watched, his boat well ready, His men low-crouched around him, swarthy faces Grim-chinned upon the taffrail, muttering oaths That trampled down the fear i' their bristly throats, While at their sides a dreadful hint of steel Sent stray gleams to the stars. But little heed Had Drake of all that menaced him, though oft Some wandering giant, belching from the feast, All blood-besmeared, would come so near he heard His heavy breathing o'er the narrow strait. Yet little care had Drake, for though he sat Bowed in the body above his quiet dead, His burning spirit wandered through the wastes,

316 Drake

Wandered through hells behind the apparent hell. Horrors immeasurable, clutching at dreams Found fair of old, but now most foul. The world Leered at him through its old remembered mask Of beauty: the green grass that clothed the fields Of England (shallow, shallow fairy dream!) What was it but the hair of dead men's graves. Rooted in death, enriched with all decay? And like a leprosy the hawthern bloom Crawled o'er the whitening bosom of the spring: And bird and beast and insect, ay and man, How fat they fed on one another's blood! And Love, what faith in Love, when spirit and flesh Are found of such a filthy composition? And Knowledge, God, his mind went reeling back To that dark voyage on the deadly coast Of Panama, where one by one his men Sickened and died of some unknown disease, Till Joseph, his own brother, in his arms Died; and Drake trampled down all tender thought, All human grief, and sought to find the cause, For his crew's sake, the ravenous unknown cause Of that fell scourge. There, in his own dark cabin, Lit by the wild light of the swinging lanthorn, He laid the naked body on that board Where they had supped together. He took the knife From the ague-stricken surgeon's palsied hands, And while the ship rocked in the eternal seas And dark waves lapped against the rolling hulk Making the silence terrible with voices. He opened his own brother's cold white corse, That pale deserted mansion of a soul, Bidding the surgeon mark, with his own eyes. While yet he had strength to use them, the foul spots, The swollen liver, the strange sodden heart, The yellow intestines. Yea, his dry lips hissed There in the stark face of Eternity. "Seëst thou? Seëst thou? Knowest thou what it means?" Then, like a dream up-surged the belfried night Of Saint Bartholomew, the scented palaces Whence harlots leered out on the twisted streets

Of Paris, choked with slaughter! Europe flamed With human torches, living altar candles, Lighted before the Cross where men had hanged The Christ of little children. Cirque by cirque The world-wide hell reeled round him, East and West, To where the tortured Indians worked the will Of lordly Spain in golden-famed Peru. "God, is thy world a madman's dream?" he groaned: And suddenly, the clamour on the shore Sank and that savage horde melted away Into the midnight forest as it came, Leaving no sign, save where the brushwood fire Still smouldered like a ruby in the gloom; And into the inmost caverns of his mind That other clamour sank, and there was peace. "A madman's dream," he whispered, "Ay, to me A madman's dream," but better, better far Than that which bears upon its awful gates, Gates of a hell defined, unalterable, Abandon hope all ye who enter here! Here, here at least the dawn hath power to bring New light, new hope, new battles. Men may fight And sweep away that evil, if no more, At least from the small circle of their swords; Then die, content if they have struck one stroke For freedom, knowledge, brotherhood; one stroke To hasten that great kingdom God proclaims Each morning through the trumpets of the Dawn.

And far away, in Italy, that night Young Galileo, gazing upward, heard The self-same whisper from the abyss of stars Which lured the soul of Shakespeare as he lay Dreaming in may-sweet England, even now, And with its infinite music called once more The soul of Drake out to the unknown West.

Now like a wild rose in the fields of heaven Slipt forth the slender fingers of the Dawn, And drew the great grey Eastern curtains back From the ivory saffroned couch. Rosily slid

One shining foot and one warm rounded knee From silken coverlets of the tossed-back clouds. Then, like the meeting after desolate years, Face to remembered face, Drake saw the Dawn Step forth in naked splendour o'er the sea; Dawn, bearing still her rich divine increase Of beauty, love, and wisdom round the world; The same, yet not the same. So strangely gleamed Her pearl and rose across the sapphire waves That scarce he knew the dead man at his feet. His world was made anew. Strangely his voice Rang through that solemn Eden of the morn Calling his men, and stranger than a dream Their boats black-blurred against the crimson East, Or flashing misty sheen where'er the light Smote on their smooth wet sides, like seraph ships Moved in a dewy glory towards the land; Their oars of glittering diamond broke the sea As by enchantment into burning jewels And scattered rainbows from their flaming blades. The clear green water lapping round their prows. The words of sharp command as now the keels Crunched on his lonely shore, and the following wave Leapt slapping o'er the sterns, in that new light Were more than any miracle. At last Drake, as they grouped a little way below The crumbling sandy cliff whereon he stood, Seeming to overshadow them as he loomed A cloud of black against the crimson sky, Spoke, as a man may hardly speak but once: "My seamen, oh my friends, companions, kings; For I am least among you, being your captain; And we are men, and all men born are kings, By right divine, and I the least of these Because I must usurp the throne of God And sit in judgment, even till I have set My seal upon the red wax of this blood, This blood of my dead friend, ere it grow cold. Not all the waters of that mighty sea Could wash my hands of sin if I should now Falter upon my path. But look to it, you,

Whose word was doom last night to this dead man; Look to it, I say, look to it! Brave men might shrink From this great voyage; but the heart of him Who dares turn backward now must be so hardy That God might make a thousand millstones of it To hang about the necks of those that hurt Some little child, and cast them in the sea. Yet if ye will be found so more than bold. Speak now, and I will hear you; God will judge. But ye shall take four ships of these my five, Tear out the lions from their painted shields, And speed you homeward. Leave me but one ship, My Golden Hynde, and five good friends, nay one, To watch when I must sleep, and I will prove This judgment just against all winds that blow. Now ye that will return, speak, let me know you, Or be for ever silent, for I swear Over this butchered body, if any swerve Hereafter from the straight and perilous way, He shall not die alone. What? Will none speak? My comrades and my friends! Yet ye must learn, Mark me, my friends, I'd have you all to know That ye are kings. I'll have no jealousies Aboard my fleet. I'll have the gentleman To pull and haul wi' the seaman. I'll not have That canker of the Spaniards in my fleet. Ye that were captains. I cashier you all. I'll have no captains: I'll have nought but seamen, Obedient to my will, because I serve England. What, will ye murmur? Have a care, Lest I should bid you homeward all alone, You whose white hands are found too delicate For aught but dallying with your jewelled swords! And thou, too, master Fletcher, my ship's chaplain, Mark me, I'll have no priest-craft. I have heard Overmuch talk of judgment from thy lips, God's judgment here, God's judgment there, upon us! Whene'er the winds are contrary, thou takest Their powers upon thee for thy moment's end. Thou art God's minister, not God's oracle: Chain up thy tongue a little, or, by His wounds,

320 Drake

If thou canst read this wide world like a book, Thou hast so little to fear, I'll set thee adrift On God's great sea to find thine own way home. Why, 'tis these very tyrannies o' the soul We strike at when we strike at Spain for England: And shall we here, in this great wilderness, Ungrappled and unchallenged, out of sight, Alone, without one struggle, sink that flag Which, when the cannon thundered, could but stream Triumphant over all the storms of death. Nav. master Wynter and my gallant captains, I see ye are tamed. Take up your ranks again In humbleness, remembering ye are kings, Kings for the sake and by the will of England, Therefore her servants till your lives' last end. Comrades, mistake not this, our little fleet Is freighted with the golden heart of England, And, if we fail, that golden heart will break. The world's wide eves are on us, and our souls Are woven together into one great flag Of England. Shall we strike it? Shall it be rent Asunder with small discord, party strife, Ephemeral conflict of contemptible tongues, Or shall it be blazoned, blazoned evermore On the most heaven-wide page of history? This is that hour, I know it in my soul, When we must choose for England. Ye are kings, And sons of Vikings, exiled from your throne. Have ye forgotten? Nay, your blood remembers! There is your kingdom, Vikings, that great ocean Whose tang is in your nostrils. Ye must choose Whether to re-assume it now for England. To claim its thunders for her panoply, To lay its lightnings in her sovereign hands, Win her the great commandment of the sea And let its glory roll with her dominion Round the wide world for ever, sweeping back All evil deeds and dreams, or whether to yield For evermore that kinghood. Ye must learn Here in this golden dawn our great emprise

Is greater than we knew. Eye hath not seen, Ear hath not heard what came across the dark Last night, as there anointed with that blood I knelt and saw the wonder that should be. I saw new heavens of freedom, a new earth Released from all old tyrannies. I saw The brotherhood of man, for which we rode, Most ignorant of the splendour of our spears, Against the crimson dynasties of Spain. Mother of freedom, home and hope and love, Our little island, far, how far away, I saw thee shatter the whole world of hate, I saw the sunrise on thy helmet flame With new-born hope for all the world in thee! Come now, to sea, to sea!"

And ere they knew What power impelled them, with one mighty cry They lifted up their hearts to the new dawn And hastened down the shores and launched the boats. And in the fierce white out-draught of the waves Thrust with their brandished oars and the boats leapt Out, and they settled at the groaning thwarts, And the white water boiled before their blades. As, with Drake's iron hand upon the helm, His own boat led the way; and ere they knew What power as of a wind bore them along. Anchor was up, their hands were on the sheets, The sails were broken out and that small squadron Was flying like a sea-bird to the South. Now to the strait Magellanus they came, And entered in with ringing shouts of joy. Nor did they think there was a fairer strait In all the world than this which lay so calm Between great silent mountains crowned with snow, Unutterably lonely. Marvellous The pomp of dawn and sunset on those heights, And like a strange new sacrilege the advance Of prows that ploughed that time-forgotten tide. But soon rude flaws, cross currents, tortuous channels

Bewildered them, and many a league they drove As down some vaster Acheron, while the coasts With wailing voices cursed them all night long, And once again the hideous fires leapt red By many a grim wrenched crag and gaunt ravine. So for a hundred leagues of whirling spume They groped, till suddenly, far away, they saw Full of the sunset, like a cup of gold. The purple Westward portals of the strait. Onward o'er roughening waves they plunged and reached Capo Desiderato, where they saw What seemed stupendous in that lonely place.— Gaunt, black, and sharp as death against the sky The Cross, the great black Cross on Cape Desire. Which dead Magellan raised upon the height To guide, or so he thought, his wandering ships, Not knowing they had left him to his doom. Not knowing how with tears, with tears of joy, Rapture, and terrible triumph, and deep awe, Another should come voyaging and read Unutterable glories in that sign; While his rough seamen raised their mighty shout And, once again, before his wondering eyes, League upon league of awful burnished gold, Rolled the unknown immeasurable sea.

Now, in those days, as even Magellan held, Men thought that Southward of the strait there swept Firm land up to the white Antarticke Pole, Which now not far they deemed. But when Drake passed From out the strait to take his Northward way Up the Pacific coast, a great head-wind Suddenly smote them; and the heaving seas Bulged all around them into billowy hills, Dark rolling mountains, whose majestic crests Like wild white flames far-blown and savagely flickering Swept through the clouds; and on their sullen slopes Like wind-whipt withered leaves those little ships, Now hurtled to the Zenith and now plunged Down into bottomless gulfs, were suddenly scattered And whirled away. Drake, on the Golden Hynde,

One moment saw them near him, soaring up Above him on the huge o'erhanging billows As if to crash down on his poop; the next, A mile of howling sea had swept between Each of those wind-whipt straws, and they were gone Through roaring deserts of embattled death, Where, like a hundred thousand chariots charged With lightnings and with thunders, one great wave Leading the unleashed ocean down the storm Hurled them away to Southward.

One last glimpse Drake caught o' the Marygold, when some mighty vortex Wide as the circle of the wide sea-line Swept them together again. He saw her staggering With mast snapt short and wreckage-tangled deck Where men like insects clung. He saw the waves Leap over her mangled hulk, like wild white wolves, Volleying out of the clouds down dismal steeps Of green-black water. Like a wounded steed Ouivering upon its haunches, up she heaved Her head to throw them off. Then, in one mass Of fury crashed the great deep over her, Trampling her down, down into the nethermost pit, As with a madman's wrath. She rose no more. And in the stream of the ocean's hurricane laughter The Golden Hynde went hurtling to the South, With sails rent into ribbons and her mast Snapt like a twig. Yea, where Magellan thought Firm land had been, the little Golden Hynde Whirled like an autumn leaf through league on league Of bursting seas, chaos on crashing chaos, A rolling wilderness of charging Alps That shook the world with their tremendous war; Grim beetling cliffs that grappled with clamorous gulfs, Valleys that vawned to swallow the wide heaven; Immense white-flowering fluctuant precipices, And hills that swooped down at the throat of hell; From Pole to Pole, one blanching bursting storm Of world-wide oceans, where the huge Pacific Roared greetings to the Atlantic and both swept

324 Drake

In broad white cataracts, league on struggling league. Pursuing and pursued, immeasurable, With Titan hands grasping the rent black sky East, West, North, South. Then, then was battle indeed Of midget men upon that wisp of grass The Golden Hynde, who, as her masts crashed, hung Clearing the tiny wreckage from small decks With ant-like weapons. Not their captain's voice Availed them now amidst the deafening thunder Of seas that felt the heavy hand of God. Only they saw across the blinding spume In steely flashes, grand and grim, a face, Like the last glimmer of faith among mankind. Calm in this warring universe, where Drake Stood, lashed to his post, beside the helm. Black seas Buffeted him. Half-stunned he dashed away The sharp brine from his eagle eyes and turned To watch some mountain-range come rushing down As if to o'erwhelm them utterly. Once, indeed, Welkin and sea were one black wave, white-fanged, White-crested, and up-heaped so mightily That, though it coursed more swiftly than a herd Of Titan steeds upon some terrible plain Nigh the huge City of Ombos, yet it seemed Most strangely slow, with all those crumbling crests Each like a cataract on a mountain-side. And moved with the steady majesty of doom High over him. One moment's flash of fear. And yet not fear, but rather life's regret, Felt Drake, then laughed a low deep laugh of joy Such as men taste in battle; yea, 'twas good To grapple thus with death; one low deep laugh, One mutter as of a lion about to spring. Then burst that thunder o'er him. Height o'er height The heavens rolled down, and waves were all the world.

Meanwhile, in England, dreaming of her sailor, Far off, his heart's bride waited, of a proud And stubborn house the bright and gracious flower. Whom oft her father urged with scanty grace That Drake was dead and she had best forget

The fellow, he grunted. For her father's heart Was fettered with small memories, mocked by all The greater world's traditions and the trace Of earth's low pedigree among the suns, Ringed with the terrible twilight of the Gods. Ringed with the blood-red dusk of dving nations, His faith was in his grandam's mighty skirt, And, in that awful consciousness of power, Had it not been that even in this he feared To sully her silken flounce or farthingale Wi' the white dust on his hands, he would have chalked To his own shame, thinking it shame, the word Nearest to God in its divine embrace Of agonies and glories, the dread word Demos across that door in Nazareth Whence came the prentice carpenter whose voice Hath shaken kingdoms down, whose menial gibbet Rises triumphant o'er the wreck of Empires And stretches out its arms amongst the Stars. But she, his daughter, only let her heart Loveably forge a charter for her love, Cheat her false creed with faithful faery dreams That wrapt her love in mystery; thought, perchance. He came of some unhappy noble race Ruined in battle for some lost high cause. And, in the general mixture of men's blood. Her dream was truer than his whose bloodless pride Urged her to wed the chinless moon-struck fool Sprung from five hundred years of idiocy Who now besought her hand; would force her bear Some heir to a calf's tongue and a coronet, Whose cherished taints of blood will please his friends With "Yea, Sir William's first-born hath the freak. The family freak, being embryonic. Yea, And with a fine half-wittedness, forsooth. Praise God, our children's children yet shall see The lord o' the manor muttering to himself At midnight by the gryphon-guarded gates, Or gnawing his nails in desolate corridors. Or pacing moonlit halls, dagger in hand, Waiting to stab his father's pitiless ghost."

So she—the girl—Sweet Bess of Sydenham. Most innocently proud, was prouder vet Than thus to let her heart stoop to the lure Of lording lovers, though her unstained soul Slumbered amidst those dreams as in old tales The princess in the enchanted forest sleeps Till the prince wakes her with a kiss and draws The far-flung hues o' the gleaming magic web Into one heart of flame. And now, for Drake, She slept like Brynhild in a ring of fire Which he must pass to win her. For the wrath Of Spain now flamed, awaiting his return, All round the seas of home; and even the Queen Elizabeth flinched, as that tremendous Power Menaced the heart of England, flinched and vowed Drake's head to Spain's ambassadors, though still By subtlety she hoped to find some way Later to save or warn him ere he came. Perchance too, nay, most like, he will be slain Or even now lies dead, out in the West, She thought, and then the promise works no harm. But, day by day, there came as on the wings Of startled winds from o'er the Spanish Main, Strange echoes as of sacked and clamouring ports And battered gates of fabulous golden cities, A murmur out of the sunset of Peru. A sea-bird's wail from Lima. While no less The wrathful menace gathered up its might All round our little isle: till now the King Philip of Spain half secretly decreed The building of huge docks from which to launch A Fleet Invincible that should sweep the seas Of all the world, throttle with one broad grasp All Protestant rebellion, having stablished His red feet in the Netherlands, thence to hurl His whole World-Empire at this little isle. England, our mother, home and hope and love, And bend her neck beneath his voke. For now No half surrender sought he. At his back, Robed with the scarlet of a thousand martyrs, Admonishing him, stood Rome, and, in her hand,

Grasping the Cross of Christ by its great hilt, She pointed it, like a dagger, tow'rds the throat Of England.

One long year, two years had passed Since Drake set sail from grey old Plymouth Sound; And in those woods of faery wonder still Slumbered his love in steadfast faith. But now With louder lungs her father urged—"He is dead: Forget him. There is one that loves you, seeks Your hand in marriage, and he is a goodly match E'en for my daughter. You shall wed him, Bess!" But when the new-found lover came to woo, Glancing in summer silks and radiant hose, Whipt doublet and enormous pointed shoon, She played him like a fish and sent him home Spluttering with dismay, a stickleback Discoloured, a male minnow of dimpled streams With all his rainbows paling in the prime, To hide amongst his lilies, while once more She took her casement seat that overlooked The sea and read in Master Spenser's book, Which Francis gave "To my dear lady and queen Bess," that most rare processional of love— "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song!" Yet did her father urge her day by day, And day by day her mother dinned her ears With petty saws, as—"When I was a girl," And "I remember what my father said," And "Love, oh feather-fancies plucked from geese You call your poets!" Yet she hardly meant To slight true love, save in her daughter's heart: For the old folk ever find it hard to see The passion of their children. When it wakes, The child becomes a stranger. So with Bess; But since her soul still slumbered, and the moons Rolled on and blurred her soul's particular love With the vague unknown impulse of her youth, Her brave resistance often melted now In tears, and her will weakened day by day: Till on a dreadful summer morn there came,

328 Drake

Borne by a wintry flaw, home to the Thames, A bruised and battered ship, all that was left. So said her crew, of Drake's ill-fated fleet. John Wynter, her commander, told the tale Of how the Golden Hynde and Marygold Had by the wind Euroclydon been driven Sheer o'er the howling edges of the world: Of how himself by God's good providence Was hurled into the strait Magellanus: Of how on the horrible frontiers of the Void He had watched in vain, lit red with beacon-fires The desperate coasts o' the black abyss, whence none Ever returned, though many a week he watched Beneath the Cross; and only saw God's wrath Burn through the heavens and devastate the mountains, And hurl unheard of oceans roaring down After the lost ships in one cataract Of thunder and splendour and fury and rolling doom.

Then, with a bitter triumph in his face, As if this were the natural end of all Such vile plebeians, as if he had foreseen it, As if himself had breathed a tactful hint Into the aristocratic ears of God. Her father broke the last frail barriers down. Broke the poor listless will o' the lonely girl. Who careless now of aught but misery Promised to wed their lordling. Mighty speed They made to press that loveless marriage on: And ere the May had mellowed into June Her marriage eve had come. Her cold hands held Drake's gift. She scarce could see her name, writ broad By that strong hand as it was, To my queen Bess. She looked out through her casement o'er the sea. Listening its old enchanted moan, which seemed Striving to speak, she knew not what. Its breath Fluttered the roses round the gray old walls, And shook the ghostly jasmine. A great moon Hung like a red lamp in the sycamore. A corn-crake in the hay-fields far away Chirped like a cricket, and the night-jar churred

His passionate love-song. Soft-winged moths besieged Her lantern. Under many a star-stabbed elm The nightingale began his golden song, Whose warm thick notes are each a drop of blood From that small throbbing breast against the thorn Pressed close to turn the white rose into red: Even as her lawn-elad may-white bosom pressed Quivering against the bars, while her dark hair Streamed round her shoulders and her small bare feet Gleamed in the dusk. Then spake she to her maid-"I cannot sleep, I cannot sleep to-night. Bring thy lute hither and sing. Alison, think you The dead can watch us from their distant world? Can our dead friends be near us when we weep? I wish 'twere so! for then my love would come, No matter then how far, my love would come, And he'd forgive me."

Then Bess bowed down her lovely head: her breast Heaved with short sobs, sickening at the heart, She grasped the casement moaning, "Love, Love, Love, Come quickly, come, before it is too late, Come quickly, oh come quickly."

Then her maid Slipped a soft arm around her and gently drew The supple quivering body, shaken with sobs, And all that firm young, sweetness to her breast, And led her to her couch, and all night long She watched beside her, till the marriage morn Blushed in the heartless East. Then swiftly flew The pitiless moments, till—as in a dream— And borne along by dreams, or like a lily Cut from its anchorage in the stream to glide Down the smooth bosom of an unknown world Through fields of unknown blossom, so moved Bess Amongst her maids, as the procession passed Forth to the little church upon the cliffs, And, as in those days was the bridal mode, Her lustrous hair in billowing beauty streamed Dishevelled o'er her shoulders, while the sun Caressed her bent and glossy head, and shone

330 Drake

Over the deep blue, white-flaked, wrinkled sea, On full-blown rosy-petalled sails that flashed Like flying blossoms fallen from her crown.

BOOK V

T

With the fruit of Aladdin's garden clustering thick in her hold, With rubies awash in her scuppers and her bilge ablaze with gold,

A world in arms behind her to sever her heart from home, The Golden Hynde drove onward over the glittering foam.

TT

If we go as we came, by the Southward, we meet wi' the fleets of Spain!

'Tis a thousand to one against us: we'll turn to the West again! We have captured a China pilot, his charts and his golden keys: We'll sail to the golden Gateway, over the golden seas.

Over the immeasurable molten gold Wrapped in a golden haze, onward they drew; And now they saw the tiny purple quay Grow larger and darker and brighten into brown Across the swelling sparkle of the waves. Brown on the quay, a train of tethered mules Munched at the nose-bags, while a Spaniard drowsed On guard beside what seemed at first a heap Of fish, then slowly turned to silver bars Up-piled and glistering in the enchanted sun. Nor did that sentry wake as, like a dream, The Golden Hunde divided the soft sleep Of warm green lapping water, sidled up, Sank sail, and moored beside the quay. But Drake, Lightly leaping ashore and stealing nigh, Picked up the Spaniard's long gay-ribboned gun Close to his ear. At once, without a sound, The watchman opened his dark eyes and stared

As at strange men who suddenly had come, Borne by some magic carpet, from the stars: Then, with a courtly bow, his right hand thrust Within the lace embroideries of his breast. Politely Drake, with pained apologies For this disturbance of a cavalier Napping on guard, straightway resolved to make Complete amends, by now relieving him Of these—which doubtless troubled his repose— These anxious bars of silver. With that word Two seamen leaped ashore and, gathering up The bars in a stout old patch of tawny sail, Slung them aboard. No sooner this was done Than out o' the valley, like a foolish jest Out of the mouth of some great John-a-dreams, In soft procession of buffoonery A woolly train of llamas proudly came Stepping by two and two along the quay, Laden with pack on pack of silver bars And driven by a Spaniard. His amaze The seamen greeted with profuser thanks For his most punctual thought and opportune Courtesy. None the less they must avouch It pained them much to see a cavalier Turned carrier; and, at once, they must insist On easing him of that too sordid care.

Then out from Tarapaca once again
They sailed, their hold a glimmering mine of wealth,
Towards Arica and Lima, where they deemed
The prize of prizes waited unaware.
For every year a gorgeous galleon sailed
With all the harvest of Potosi's mines
And precious stones from dead king's diadems,
Aztees' and Incas' gem-encrusted crowns,
Pearls from the glimmering Temples of the Moon,
Rich opals with their milky rainbow-clouds,
White diamonds from the Temples of the Sun,
Carbuncles flaming scarlet, amethysts,

Rubies, and sapphires; these to Spain she brought To glut her priestly coffers. Now not far Ahead they deemed she lay upon that coast, Crammed with the lustrous Indies, wrung with threat And torture from the naked Indian slaves. To him that spied her top-sails first a prize Drake offered of the wondrous chain he worz; And every seaman, every ship-boy, watched Not only for the prize, but for their friends, If haply these had weathered through the storm. Nor did they know their friends had homeward turned, Bearing to England and to England's Queen, And his heart's queen, the tale that Drake was dead.

Northward they cruised along a warm wild coast That like a most luxurious goddess drowsed Supine to heaven, her arms behind her head, One knee up-thrust to make a mountain-peak, Her rosy breasts up-heaving their soft snow In distant Andes, and her naked side With one rich curve for half a hundred leagues Bathed by the creaming foam; her heavy hair Fraught with the perfume of a thousand forests Tossed round about her beauty; and her mouth A scarlet mystery of distant flower Up-turned to take the kisses of the sun. But like a troop of boys let loose from school The adventurers went by, startling the stillness Of that voluptuous dream-encumbered shore With echoing shouts of laughter and alien song.

But as they came to Arica, from afar
They heard the clash of bells upon the breeze,
And knew that Rumour with her thousand wings
Had rushed before them. Horsemen in the night
Had galloped through the white coast-villages
And spread the dreadful cry "El Draque!" abroad,
And when the gay adventurers drew nigh
They found the quays deserted, and the ships
All flown, except one little fishing-boat
Wherein an old man like a tortoise moved

A wrinkled head above the rusty net His crawling hands repaired. He seemed to dwell Outside the world of war and peace, outside Everything save his daily task, and cared No whit who else might win or lose; for all The pilot asked of him without demur He answered, scarcely looking from his work. A galleon laden with eight hundred bars Of silver, not three hours ago had flown Northward, he muttered. Ere the words were out, The will of Drake thrilled through the Golden Hynde Like one sharp trumpet-call, and ere they knew What power impelled them, crowding on all sail Northward they surged, and roaring down the wind At Chiuli, port of Arequipa, saw The chase at anchor. Wondering they came With all the gunners waiting at their guns Bare-armed and silent—nearer, nearer yet,— Close to the enemy. But no sight or sound Of living creature stirred upon her decks. Only a great grey cat lay in the sun Upon a warm smooth cannon-butt. A chill Ran through the veins of even the boldest there At that too peaceful silence. Cautiously Drake neared her in his pinnace: cautiously, Cutlass in hand, up that mysterious hull He clomb, and wondered, as he climbed, to breathe The friendly smell o' the pitch and hear the waves With their incessant old familiar sound Crackling and slapping against her windward flank. A ship of dreams was that; for when they reached The silent deck, they saw no crouching forms, They heard no sound of life. Only the hot Creak of the cordage whispered in the sun. The cat stood up and vawned, and slunk away Slowly, with furtive glances. The great hold Was empty, and the rich cabin stripped and bare. Suddenly one of the seamen with a cry Pointed where, close inshore, a little boat Stole towards the town; and, with a louder cry, Drake bade his men aboard the Golden Hunde.

Scarce had they pulled two hundred yards away
When, with a roar that seemed to buffet the heavens
And rip the heart of the sea out, one red flame
Blackened with fragments, the great galleon burst
Asunder! All the startled waves were strewn
With wreckage; and Drake laughed—"My lads, we have
dieed

With death to-day, and won! My merry lads, It seems that Spain is bolting with the stakes! Now, if I have to stretch the skies for sails And summon the blasts of God up from the South To fill my canvas, I will overhaul Those dusky devils with the treasure-ship That holds our hard-earned booty. Pull hard all, Hard for the Golden Hynde."

And so they came

At dead of night on Callao de Lima! They saw the harbour lights across the waves Glittering, and the shadowy hulks of ships Gathered together like a flock of sheep Within the port. With shouts and clink of chains A shadowy ship was entering from the North, And like the shadow of that shadow slipped The Golden Hunde beside her thro' the gloom: And side by side they anchored in the port Amidst the shipping! Over the dark tide A small boat from the customs-house drew near. A sleepy, yawning, gold-laced officer Boarded the Golden Hunde, and with a cry. Stumbling against a cannon-butt, he saw The bare-armed British seamen in the gloom All waiting by their guns. Wildly he plunged Over the side and urged his boat away, Crying, "El Draque! El Draque!" At that dread word The darkness filled with clamour, and the ships, Cutting their cables, drifted here and there In mad attempts to seek the open sea. Wild lights burnt hither and thither, and all the port,

One furnace of confusion, heaved and seethed In terror; for each shadow of the night, Nay, the great night itself, was all El Draque. The Dragon's wings were spread from quay to quay, The very lights that burnt from mast to mast And flared across the tide kindled his breath To fire; while here and there a British pinnace Slipped softly thro' the roaring gloom and glare, Ransacking ship by ship; for each one thought A fleet had come upon them. Each gave up The struggle as each was boarded; while, elsewhere, Cannon to cannon, friends bombarded friends.

Yet not one ounce of treasure in Callao They found; for, fourteen days before they came, That greatest treasure-ship of Spain, with all The gorgeous harvest of that year, had sailed For Panama: her ballast—silver bars; Her cargo—rubies, emeralds, and gold.

Out through the clamour and the darkness, out, Out to the harbour mouth, the Golden Hynde, Steered by the iron soul of Drake, returned: And where the way was blocked, her cannon clove A crimson highway to the midnight sea. Then Northward, Northward, o'er the jewelled main, Under the white moon like a storm they drove In quest of the Cacafuego. Fourteen days Her start was; and at dawn the fair wind sank, And chafing lay the Golden Hynde, becalmed; While, on the hills, the Viceroy of Peru Marched down from Lima with two thousand men. And sent out four huge ships of war to sink Or capture the fierce Dragon. Loud laughed Drake To see them creeping nigh, urged with great oars, Then suddenly pause; for none would be the first To close with him. And, ere they had steeled their hearts To battle, a fair breeze broke out anew. And Northward sped the little Golden Hunde In quest of the lordliest treasure-ship of Spain.

336 Drake

Behind her lay a world in arms; for now Wrath and confusion clamoured for revenge From sea to sea. Spain claimed the pirate's head From England, and awaited his return With all her tortures. And where'er he passed He sowed the dragon's teeth, and everywhere Cadmean broods of armèd men arose And followed, followed on his fiery trail. Men toiled at Lima to fit out a fleet Grim enough to destroy him. All night long The flare went up from cities on the coast Where men like naked devils toiled to cast Cannon that might have overwhelmed the powers Of Michael when he drave that hideous rout Through livid chaos to the black abvss. Small hope indeed there seemed of safe return: But Northward sped the little Golden Hynde, The world-watched midget ship of eighteen guns, Undaunted; and upon the second dawn Sighted a galleon, not indeed the chase. Yet worth a pause; for out of her they took— Embossed with emeralds large as pigeon's eggs— A golden crucifix, with eighty pounds In weight of gold. The rest they left behind: And onward, onward, to the North they flew-A score of golden miles, a score of green, An hundred miles, eight hundred miles of foam, Rainbows and fire, ransacking as they went Ship after ship for news o' the chase and gold: Learning from every capture that they drew Nearer and nearer. At Truxillo, dim And dreaming city, a-drowse with purple flowers, She had paused, ay, paused to take a freight of gold! At Paita—she had passed two days in front. Only two days, two days ahead; nay, one! At Quito, close inshore, a youthful page, Bright-eyed, ran up the rigging and cried, "A sail! A sail! The Cacafuego! And the chain Is mine!" And by the strange cut of her sails. Whereof they had been told in Callao, They knew her!

Heavily laden with her gems,
Lazily drifting with her golden fruitage,
Over the magic seas they saw her hull
Loom as they onward drew; but Drake, for fear
The prey might take alarm and run ashore,
Trailed wine-skins, filled with water, over the side
To hold his ship back, till the darkness fell,
And with the night the off-shore wind arose.
At last the sun sank down, the rosy light
Faded from Andes' peaked and bosomed snow:
The night-wind rose: the wine-skins were up-hauled;
And, like a hound unleashed, the Golden Hynde
Leapt forward thro' the gloom.

A cable's length

Divided them. The Cacafuego heard A rough voice in the darkness bidding her Heave to! She held her course. Drake gave the word. A broadside shattered the night, and over her side Her main-yard elattered like a broken wing! On to her decks the British sea-dogs swarmed, Cutlass in hand: that fight was at an end.

The ship was cleared, a prize crew placed a-board, Then both ships turned their heads to the open sea. At dawn, being out of sight of land, they 'gan Examine the great prize. None ever knew Save Drake and Gloriana what wild wealth They had captured there. Thus much at least was known: An hundredweight of gold, and twenty tons Of silver bullion; thirteen chests of coins; Nuggets of gold unnumbered; countless pearls, Diamonds, emeralds; but the worth of these Was past all reckoning. In the crimson dawn, Ringed with the lonely pomp of sea and sky, The naked-footed seamen bathed knee-deep In gold and gathered up Aladdin's fruit-All-colored gems-and tossed them in the sun. The hold like one great elfin orchard gleamed With dusky globes and tawny glories piled, Hesperian apples, heap on mellow heap, Rich with the hues of sunset, rich and ripe

And ready for the enchanted cider-press: An Emperor's ransom in each burning orb; A kingdom's purchase in each clustered bough; The freedom of all slaves in every chain.

BOOK VI

Now like the soul of Ophir on the sea Glittered the Golden Hyris, and all her heart Turned home to England. As a child that finds A ruby ring upon the highway, straight Homeward desires to run with it, so she Yearned for her home and country. Yet the world Was all in arms behind her. Fleet on fleet Awaited her return. Along the coast The very churches melted down their chimes And cast them into cannon. To the South A thousand cannon watched Magellan's straits, And feets were scouring all the sea like bounds, With orders that where er they came on Drake, Although he were the Dragon of their dreams, They should out-blast his thunders and convey. Dead or alive, his body back to Spain.

And Drake laughed out and said. "My trusty lads
Of Devon, you have made the wide world ring
With England's name; you have swept one half the seas
From sky to sky; and in our oaken hold
You have packed the gorgeous Indies. We shall sail
But slowly with such wealth. If we return,
We are one against ten thousand! We will seek
The fabled Northern passage, take our gold
Safe home; then out to sea again and try
Our guns against their guns."

And as they sailed Northward, they swooped on warm blue Guatulco For food and water. Nigh the dreaming port The grand altalies in high conclave sat. Blazing with gold and scartet, as they tried A catch of negro states upon the charge Of idleness in Spanish mines, dumb states. With bare stated backs and labour-troken snees, And sorrowith eyes like those of wearied kine Spent from the pluring. Even as the judge Rose to condomn them to the singular matter. The British coats are we quiet and margare Grew wider with amazement, and the judge Staggered against his gilled throne.

I thank

Almighty God," cried Drake, who hath given me this—That I who once in ignorance, produced Slaves for the golden to way-house of Spain. May now, in England's name, help to require That wrong. For now I say in England's name. Where'er her standard flies, the slave shall stand Upright, the shackles fall from off his limbs. Unyoke the prisoners: tell them they are men Once more, not beasts of turden. Set them free But take these gold and scarnet popinjays. Aboard my Golden Hymde, and let them write An order that their town shall now provide My boars with food and water.

This being ione.

The slaves being placed in safety on the prize. The G.M. H. was revictualled and the casks Replenished with fresh water. Drake set free The prizes and swept Northward once again. And, off the coast of Northward, found A sudden treasure better than all gold. For on the track of the China trade they caught A ship whereon two China pilots sailed. And in their cabin lay the secret charts. Red her cityphs of Empire, unknown charts Of siken sea-roads fown the golden West Where all roads meet and East and West are one. And, with that mystery strong in their hearts.

And Northward, till the soft luxurious coasts Hardened, the winds grew bleak, the great green waves Loomed high like mountains round them, and the spray Froze on their spars and vards. Fresh from the warmth Of tropic seas the men could hardly brook That cold; and when the floating hills of ice Like huge green shadows crowned with ghostly snow Went past them with strange whispers in the gloom, Or took mysterious colours in the dawn, Their hearts misgave them, and they found no way: But all was iron shore and icy sea. And one by one the crew fell sick to death In that fierce winter, and the land still ran Westward and showed no passage. Tossed with storms. Onward they plunged, or furrowed gentler tides Of ice-lit emerald that made the prow A faery beak of some enchanted ship Flinging wild rainbows round her as she drove Thro' seas unsailed by mortal mariners. Past isles unhailed of any human voice, Where sound and silence mingled in one song Of utter solitude. Ever as they went The flag of England blazoned the broad breeze, Northward, where never ship had sailed before, Northward, till lost in helpless wonderment, Dazed as a soul awakening from the dream Of death to some wild dawn in Paradise (Yet burnt with cold as they whose very tears Freeze on their faces where Cocytus wails) All world-worn, bruised, wing-broken, wracked, and wrenched. Blackened with lightning, scarred as with evil deeds, But all embalmed in beauty by that sun Which never sets, bosomed in peace at last The Golden Hynde rocked on a glittering calm. Seas that no ship had ever sailed, from sky To glistening sky, swept round them. Glory and gleam. Glamour and lucid rapture and diamond air Embraced her broken spars, begrimed with gold Her gloomy hull, rocking upon a sphere New made, it seemed, mysterious with the first Mystery of the world, where holy sky

And sacred sea shone like the primal Light Of God, a-stir with whispering sea-bird's wings And glorious with clouds. Only, all day, All night, the rhythmic utterance of His will In the deep sigh of seas that washed His throne, Rose and relapsed across Eternity, Timed to the pulse of acons. All their world Seemed strange as unto us the great new heavens And glittering shores, if on some aery bark To Saturn's coasts we came and traced no more The tiny gleam of our familiar earth Far off, but heard tremendous oceans roll Round unimagined continents, and saw Terrible mountains unto which our Alps Were less than mole-hills, and such gaunt ravines Cleaving them and such eataracts roaring down As burst the gates of our earth-moulded senses, Pour the eternal glory on our souls, And, while ten thousand chariots bring the dawn, Hurl us poor midgets trembling to our knees. Glory and glamour and rapture of lucid air. Ice cold, with subtle colours of the sky Embraced her broken spars, belted her hulk With brilliance, while she dipped her jacinth beak In waves of mounded splendour, and sometimes A great ice-mountain flashed and floated by Throned on the waters, pinnacled and crowned With all the smouldering jewels in the world: Or in the darkness, glimmering berg on berg, All emerald to the moon, went by like ghosts Whispering to the South.

There, as they lay, Waiting a wind to fill the stiffened sails, Their hearts remembered that in England now The Spring was nigh, and in that lonely sea The skilled musicians filled their eyes with home.

SONG

T

It is the Spring-tide now!
Under the hawthorn-bough
The milkmaid goes:
Her eyes are violets blue
Washed with the morning dew,
Her mouth a rose.
It is the Spring-tide now.

II

The lanes are growing sweet,
The lambkins frisk and bleat
In all the meadows:
The glossy dappled kine
Blink in the warm sunshine,
Cooling their shadows.
It is the Spring-tide now.

III

Soon hand in sunburnt hand Thro' God's green fairyland, England, our home, Whispering as they stray Adown the primrose woy, Lovers will roam. It is the Spring-tide now.

And then, with many a chain of linked sweetness, Harmonious gold, they drew their hearts and souls Back, back to England, thoughts of wife and child Mother and sweetheart and the old companions, The twisted streets of London and the deep Delight of Devon lanes, all softly voiced In words or cadences, made them breathe hard And gaze across the everlasting sea, Craving for that small isle so far away.

SONG

T

O, you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With the flowery largesse of May
Sweet from the palm of her hand
Out-flung, till the hedges grew white
As the green-arched billows with spray.

П

White from the fall of her feet
The daisies awake in the sun!
Cliff-side and valley and plain
With the breath of the thyme growing sweet
Laugh, for the Spring is begun;
And Love hath turned homeward again.

O, you beautiful land!

III

Where should the home be of Love,

But there, where the hawthorn-tree blows,

And the milkmaid trips out with her pail,

And the skylark in heaven above

Sings, till the West is a rose

And the East is a nightingale?

O, you beautiful land!

IV

There where the sycamore trees
Are shading the satin-skinned kine,
And oaks, whose brethren of old
Conquered the strength of the seas,
Grow broad in the sunlight and shine
Crowned with their cressets of gold;

O, you beautiful land!

V

Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With rose-coloured cloudlets above;
Billowing broad and grand
Where the meadows with blossom are white
For the foot-fall, the foot-fall of Love.
O, you beautiful land!

VI

How should we sing of thy beauty,
England, mother of men,
We that can look in thine eyes
And see there the splendour of duty
Deep as the depth of their ken,
Wide as the ring of thy skies.

VII

O, you beautiful land,
Deep-bosomed with beeches and bright
With the flowery largesse of May
Sweet from the palm of her hand
Out-flung, till the hedges grew white
As the green-arched billows with spray.

O, you beautiful land!

And when a fair wind rose again, there seemed No hope of passage by that fabled way Northward, and suddenly Drake put down his helm And, with some wondrous purpose in his eyes, Turned Southward once again, until he found A lonely natural harbour on the coast Near San Francisco, where the cliffs were white Like those of England, and the soft soil teemed With gold. There they careened the Golden Hynde—

Her keel being thick with barnacles and weeds-And built a fort and dockyard to refit Their little wandering home, not half so large As many a coasting barque to-day that searce Would cross the Channel, yet she had swept the seas Of half the world, and even now prepared For new adventures greater than them all. And as the sound of chisel and hammer broke The stillness of that shore, shy figures came, Keen-faced and grave-eyed Indians, from the woods To bow before the strange white-faced newcomers As gods. Whereat the chaplain all aghast Persuaded them with signs and broken words And grunts that even Drake was but a man. Whom none the less the savages would crown With woven flowers and barbarous ritual King of New Albion-so the seamen called That land, remembering the white cliffs of home. Much they implored, with many a sign and cry, Which by the rescued slaves upon the prize Were part interpreted, that Drake would stay And rule them; and the vision of the great Empire of Englishmen arose and flashed A moment round them, on that lonely shore. A small and weather-beaten band they stood, Bronzed seamen by the laughing rescued slaves, Ringed with gigantic loneliness and saw An Empire that should liberate the world; A Power before the lightning of whose arms Darkness should die and all oppression cease; A Federation of the strong and weak, Whereby the weak were strengthened and the strong Made stronger in the increasing good of all; A gathering up of one another's loads: A turning of the wasteful rage of war To accomplish large and fruitful tasks of peace. Even as the strength of some great stream is turned To grind the corn for bread. E'en thus on England That splendour dawned which those in dreams foresaw And saw not with their living eyes, but thou, England, mayst lift up eyes at last and see,

Who, like that angel of the Apocalypse Hast set one foot upon thy sea-girt isle, The other upon the waters, and canst raise Now, if thou wilt, above the assembled nations, The trumpet of deliverance to thy lips.

.

At last their task was done, the Golden Hynde Undocked, her white wings hoisted; and away Westward they swiftly glided from the shore Where, with a wild lament, their Indian friends, Knee-deep i' the creaming foam, all stood at gaze. Like men that for one moment in their lives Have seen a mighty drama cross their path And played upon the stage of vast events Knowing, henceforward, all their life is nought. But Westward sped the little Golden Hunde Across the uncharted ocean, with no guide But that great homing cry of all their hearts. Far out of sight of land they steered, straight out Across the great Pacific, in those days When even the compass proved no trusty guide. Straight out they struck in that small bark, straight out Week after week, without one glimpse of aught But heaving seas, across the uncharted waste Straight to the sunset. Laughingly they sailed, With all that gorgeous booty in their holds, A splendour dragging deep through seas of doom, A prey to the first great hurricane that blew Except their God averted it. And still Their skilled musicians cheered the way along To shores beyond the sunset and the sea. And oft at nights, the vellow fo'c'sle lanthorn Swung over swarthy singing faces grouped Within the four small wooden walls that made Their home and shut them from the unfathomable Depths of mysterious gloom without that rolled All around them; or Tom Moone would heartily troll A simple stave that struggled oft with thoughts Beyond its reach, vet reached their hearts no less.

SONG

Ι

Good luck befall you, mariners all
That sail this world so wide!
Whither we go, not yet we know:
We steer by wind and tide.
Be it right or wrong, I sing this song;
For now it seems to me
Men steer their socils thre' rocks and shoals
As mariners use by sea.

Chorus: As mariners use by sea, My lads, As mariners use by sea!

II

And now they plough to windward, now
They drive before the gale!
Now are they hurled across the world
With torn and tattered sail;
Yet, as they will, they steer and still
Defy the world's rude glee:
Till death o'erwhelm them, mast and helm,
They ride and rule the sea.

Chorus: They ride and rule the sea, My lads, They ride and rule the sea!

Meantime, in England, Bess of Sydenham,
Drake's love and queen, being told that Drake was dead,
And numbed with grief, obeying her father's will
That dreadful summer morn in bridal robes
Had passed to wed her father's choice. The sun
Streamed smiling on her as she went, half-dazed,
Amidst her smiling maids. Nigh to the sea

348 Drake

The church was, and the mellow marriage bells Mixed with its music. Far away, white sails Spangled the sapphire, white as flying blossoms New-fallen from her crown; but as the glad And sad procession neared the little church. From some strange ship-of-war, far out at sea, There came a sudden tiny puff of smoke— And then a dull strange throb, a whistling hiss. And scarce a score of vards away a shot Ploughed up the turf. None knew, none ever knew From whence it came, whether a perilous jest Of English seamen, or a wanton deed Of Spaniards, or mere accident; but all Her maids in flight were scattered. Bess awoke As from a dream, crying aloud—"'Tis he, 'Tis he that sends this message. He is not dead. I will not pass the porch. Come home with me. 'Twas he that sent that message."

Nought availed, Her father's wrath, her mother's tears, her maids' Cunning persuasions, nought; home she returned, And waited for the dead to come to life; Nor waited long; for ere that month was out, Rumour on rumour reached the coasts of England, Borne as it seemed on sea-birds' wings, that Drake Was on his homeward way.

BOOK VII

The imperial wrath of Spain, one world-wide sea Of furious pomp and flouted power, now surged All round this little isle, with one harsh roar Deepening for Drake's return—"The Golden Hynde Ye swore had foundered, Drake ye swore was drowned; They are on their homeward way! The head of Drake! What answer, what account, what recompense Now can ye yield our might invincible Except the head of Drake, whose bloody deeds Have reddened the Pacific, who hath sacked Cities of gold, burnt fleets, and ruined realms, What answer but his life?"

To which the Queen

Who saw the storm of Europe slowly rising
In awful menace o'er her wave-beat throne,
And midmost of the storm, the ensanguined robes
Of Rome and murderous hand, grasping the Cross
By its great hilt, pointing it like a brand
Blood-blackened at the throat of England, saw
Like skeleton castles wrapt in rolling mist
The monstrous engines and designs of war,
The secret fleets and brooding panoplies
Philip prepared, growing from day to day
In dusk armipotent and embattled gloom
Surrounding her, replied: "The life of Drake,
If, on our strict enquiry, in due order
We find that Drake have hurt our friends, mark well,
If Drake have hurt our friends, the life of Drake."

And while the world awaited him, as men Might wait an earthquake, quietly one grey morn, One grey October morn of mist and rain When all the window-panes in Plymouth dripped With listless drizzle, and only through her streets Rumbled the death-cart with its dreary bell Monotonously plangent (for the plague Had lately like a vampire sucked the veins Of Plymouth town), a little weed-clogged ship, Grey as a ghost, glided into the Sound And anchored, scarce a soul to see her come, And not an eve to read the faded scroll Around her battered prow—the Golden Hynde. Then, thro' the dumb grey misty listless port, A rumour like the colours of the dawn Streamed o'er the shining quays, up the wet streets, In at the tavern doors, flashed from the panes And turned them into diamonds, fired the pools In every muddy lane with Spanish gold, Flushed in a thousand faces, Drake is come! Down every crowding alley the urchins leaped Tossing their caps, the Golden Hynde is come!

Fisherman, citizen, prentice, dame and maid. Fat justice, floury baker, bloated butcher, Fishwife, minister and apothecary, Yea, even the driver of the death-cart, leaving His ghastly load, using his dreary bell To merrier purpose, down the seething streets. Panting, tumbling, jostling, helter-skelter To the water-side, to the water-side they rushed. And some knee-deep beyond it, all one wild Welcome to Francis Drake! Wild kerchiefs fluttering, thunderous hurrahs Rolling from quay to quay, a thousand arms Outstretched to that grey ghostly little ship At whose masthead the British flag still flew: Then, over all, in one tumultuous tide Of pealing joy, the Plymouth bells outclashed A nation's welcome home to Francis Drake.

The very Golden Hynde, no idle dream, The little ship that swept the Spanish Main. Carelessly lying there, in Plymouth Sound, The Golden Hynde, the wonder of the world. A glory wrapt her grevness, and no boat Dared yet approach, save one, with Drake's close friends. Who came to warn him: "England stands alone And Drake is made the price of England's peace. The Queen, perforce, must temporise with Spain. The Invincible! She hath forfeited thy life To Spain, against her will. Only by this Rejection of thee as a privateer She averted instant war; for now the menace Of Spain draws nigher, looms darker every hour. The world is made Spain's footstool. Philip, the King, E'en now hath added to her boundless power Without a blow, the vast domains and wealth Of Portugal, and deadlier yet, a coast That crouches over against us. Cadiz holds A huge Armada, none knows where to strike: And even this day a flying horseman brought Rumours that Spain hath landed a great force In Ireland. Mary of Scotland only waits

The word to stab us in the side for Rome.
The Queen, weighed down by Burleigh and the friends
Of peace at any cost, may yet be driven
To make thy life our ransom, which indeed
She hath already sworn, or seemed to swear."

To whom Drake answered, "Gloriana lives; And in her life mine only fear lies dead, Mine only fear, for England, not myself. Willing am I and glad, as I have lived, To die for England's sake. Yet, lest the Queen be driven now to restore This cargo that I bring her—a world's wealth, The golden springs of all the power of Spain, The jewelled hearts of all those cruel realms (For I have plucked them out) beyond the sea; Lest she be driven to yield them up again For Spain and Spain's delight, I will warp out Behind St. Nicholas' Island. The fierce plague In Plymouth shall be colour and excuse, Until my courier return from court With Gloriana's will. If it be death, I'll out again to sea, strew its rough floor With costlier largesses than kings can throw, And, ere I die, will singe the Spaniard's beard And set the fringe of his imperial robe Blazing along his coasts. Then let him roll His galleons round the little Golden Hynde, Bring her to bay, if he can, on the high seas, Ring us about with thousands, we'll not yield, I and my Golden Hynde, we will go down, With flag still flying on the last stump left us And all my cannon spitting out the fires Of everlasting scorn into his face."

So Drake warped out the Golden Hynde anew Behind St. Nicholas' Island. She lay there, The small grey-golden centre of the world That raged all round her, the last hope, the star Of Protestant freedom, she, the outlawed ship Holding within her the great head and heart

Of England's ocean power; and all the fleets That have enfranchised earth, in that small ship, Lay waiting for their doom.

Past her at night Fisher-boats glided, wondering as they heard In the thick darkness the great songs they deemed Must oft have risen from many a lonely sea; For oft had Spaniards brought a rumour back Of that strange pirate who in royal state Sailed to a sound of violins, and dined With skilled musicians round him, turning all Battle and storm and death into a song.

SONG

The same Sun is o'er us,

The same Love shall find us,

The same and none other

Wherever we be;

With the same hope before us,

The same home behind us,

England, our mother,

Ringed round with the sea.

No land in the ring of it

Now, all around us

Only the splendid

Re-surging unknown;

How should we sing of it,

This that hath found us

By the great stars attended

At midnight, alone?

Our highway none knoweth,
Yet our blood hath discerned it!
Clear, clear is our path now
Whose foreheads are free
Where the hurricane bloweth
Our spirits have learned it,
'Tis the highway of wrath, now,
The storm's way, the sea.

When the waters lay breathless
Gazing at Hesper
Guarding that glorious
Fruitage of gold,
Heard we the deathless
Wonderful whisper
We follow, victorious
To-night, as of old.

Ah, the broad miles of it
White with the onset
Of waves without number
Warring for glee;
Ah, the soft smiles of it
Down to the sunset,
Sacred for slumber
The swan's bath, the sea!

When the breakers charged thundering
In thousands all round us
With a lightning of lances
Up-hurtled on high,
When the stout ships were sundering
A rapture hath crowned us
Like the wild light that dances
On the crests that flash by.

Our highway none knoweth,
Yet our blood hath discerned it!
Clear, clear is our path now
Whose foreheads are free,
Where Euroclydon bloweth
Our spirits have learned it,
'Tis the highway of wrath, now,
The storm's way, the sea!

Who now will follow us
Where England's flag leadeth us,
Where gold not inveigles,
Nor statesmen betray?

Tho' the deep midnight swallow us
Let her cry when she needeth us,
We return, her sea-eagles,
The hurricane's way.

For the same Sun is o'er us,
The same Love shall find us,
The same and none other
Wherever we be;
With the same hope before us,
The same home behind us,
England, our mother,
Ringed round with the sea.

So six days passed, and on the seventh returned The courier, with a message from the Queen Summoning Drake to court, bidding him bring Also such curious trifles of his voyage As might amuse her, also be of good cheer She bade him, and rest well content his life In Gloriana's hands were safe: so Drake Laughingly landed with his war-bronzed crew Amid the wide-eved throng on Plymouth beach And loaded twelve big pack-horses with pearls Beyond all price, diamonds, crosses of gold, Rubies that smouldered once for Aztec kings. And great dead Incas' gem-encrusted crowns. Also, he said, we'll add a sack or twain Of gold doubloons, pieces of eight, moidores, And such-like Spanish trash, for those poor lords At court, lilies that toil not neither spin, Wherefore, methinks their purses oft grow lean In these harsh times. 'Twere even as well their tongues Wagged in our favour, now, as in our blame.

Six days thereafter a fearful whisper reached Mendoza, plenipotentiary of Spain In London, that the pirate Drake was now In secret conference with the Queen, nay more,

That he, the Master-thief of the golden world, Drake, even he, that bloody buccaneer, Had six hours' audience with her Majesty Daily, nay more, walked with her in her garden Alone, among the fiery Autumn leaves, Talking of God knows what, and suddenly The temporizing diplomatic voice Of caution he was wont to expect from England And blandly accept as his imperial due Changed to a ringing key of firm resolve, Resistance, nay, defiance. For when he came Demanding audience of the Queen, behold, Her officers of state with mouths awry Informed the high ambassador of Spain, Despite his pomp and circumstance, the Queen Could not receive him, being in conference With some rough seaman, pirate, what you will, A fellow made of bronze, a buccaneer, Maned like a lion, bearded like a pard, With hammered head, clamped jaws, and great deep eyes That burned with fierce blue colours of the brine, And liked not Spain—Drake! 'Twas the very name, One Francis Drake! a Titan that had stood, Thundering commands against the thundering heavens, On lightning-shattered, storm-swept decks and drunk Great draughts of glory from the rolling sea, El Draque! El Draque! Nor could she promise aught To Spain's ambassador, nor see his face Again, while yet one Spanish musketeer Remained in Ireland.

Vainly the Spaniard raged Of restitution, recompense; for now Had Drake brought up the little Golden Hynde To London, and the rumor of her wealth Out-topped the wild reality. The crew Were princes as they swaggered down the streets In weather-beaten splendour. Out of their doors To wonder and stare the jostling citizens ran When They went by; and through the length and breadth Of England, now, the gathering glory of life Shone like the dawn. O'er hill and dale it streamed,

Dawn, everlasting and almighty dawn,
Making a golden pomp of every oak—
Had not its British brethren swept the seas?—
In each remotest hamlet, by the hearth,
The cart, the grey church-porch, the village pump
By meadow and mill and old manorial hall,
By turnpike and by tavern, farm and forge,
Men staved the crimson vintage of romance
And held it up against the light and drank it,
And with it drank confusion to the wrath
That menaced England, but eternal honour,
While blood ran in their veins, to Francis Drake.

BOOK VIII

Meanwhile, young Bess of Sydenham, the queen Of Drake's deep heart, emprisoned in her home, Fenced by her father's angry watch and ward Lest he—the poor plebeian dread of Spain, Shaker of nations, king of the untamed seas— Might win some word with her, sweet Bess, the flower Triumphant o'er their rusty heraldries, Waited her lover, as in ancient tales The pale princess from some grey wizard's tower Midmost the deep sigh of enchanted woods Looks for the starry flash of her knight's shield: Or on the further side o' the magic West Sees pushing through the ethereal golden gloom Some blurred black prow, with loaded colours coarse. Clouded with sunsets of a mortal sea. And rich with earthly crimson. She, with lips Apart, still waits the shattering golden thrill When it shall grate the coasts of Fairvland.

Only, to Bess of Sydenham, there came No sight or sound to break that frozen spell And lonely watch, no message from her love, Or none that reached her restless helpless hands. Only the general rumour of the world Borne to her by the gossip of her maid Kept the swift pictures passing through her brain Of how the Golden Hunde was hauled ashore At Deptford through a sea of exultation, And by the Queen's command was now set up For an everlasting memory! Of how the Queen with subtle statecraft still Kept Spain at arm's-length, dangling, while she played At fast and loose with France, whose embassy, Arriving with the marriage-treaty, found (And trembled at her daring, since the wrath Of Spain seemed, in their eyes, to flake with foam The storm-beat hulk) a gorgeous banquet spread To greet them on that very Golden Hynde Which sacked the Spanish main, a gorgeous feast, The like of which old England had not seen Since the bluff days of boisterous king Hal, Great shields of brawn with mustard, roasted swans, Haunches of venison, roasted chines of beef, And chewets baked, big olive-pyes thereto, And sallets mixed with sugar and cinnamon, White wine, rose-water, and candied eringoes. There, on the outlawed ship, whose very name Rang like a blasphemy in the imperial ears Of Spain (its every old worm-eaten plank Being scored with scorn and courage that not storm Nor death, nor all their Inquisition racks, The white-hot irons and bloody branding whips That scarred the backs of Rome's pale galley-slaves, Her captured English seamen, ever could daunt), There with huge Empires waiting for one word, One breath of colour and excuse, to leap Like wolves at the naked throat of her small isle, There in the eyes of the staggered world she stood, Great Gloriana, while the live decks reeled With flash of jewels and flush of rustling silks. She stood with Drake, the corsair, and her people Surged like a sea around. There did she give Open defiance with her agate smile To Spain. "Behold this pirate, now," she cried, "Whose head my Lord, the Invincible, Philip of Spain Demands from England. Kneel down, Master Drake, 358

Kneel down; for now have I this gilded sword Wherewith to strike it off. Nay, thou my lord Ambassador of France, since I be woman, And squeamish at the sight of blood, give thou The accolade." With that jest she gave the hilt (Thus, even in boldness, playing a crafty part, And dangling France before the adventurous deed) To Marchaumont; and in the face of Europe, With that huge fleet in Cadiz and the whole World-power of Spain crouching around her isle, Knighted the master-thief of the unknown world, Sir Francis Drake.

And then the rumour came Of vaster privateerings planned by Drake Against the coasts of Philip; but held in check And fretting at the leash, as ever the Queen Clung to her statecraft, while Drake's enemies Worked in the dark against him. Spain had set An emperor's ransom on his life. At home John Doughty, treacherous brother of that traitor Who met his doom by Drake's own hand, intrigued With Spain abroad and Spain's dark emissaries At home to avenge his brother. Burleigh still Beset Drake's path with pitfalls: treacherous greed For Spain's blood-money daggered all the dark Around him, and John Doughty without cease Sought to make use of all; until, by chance. Drake gat the proof of treasonable intrigue With Spain, against him, up to the deadly hilt, And hurled him into the Tower.

Many a night
She sat by that old casement nigh the sea
And heard its ebb and flow. With soul erect
And splendid now she waited, yet there came
No message; and, she thought, he hath seen at last
My little worth. And when her maiden sang,
With white throat throbbing softly in the dusk
And fingers gently straying o'er the lute,
As was her wont at twilight, some old song
Of high disdainful queens and lovers pale
Pining a thousand years before their feet,

359

She thought, "O, if my lover loved me yet
My heart would break for joy to welcome him:
Perchance his true pride will not let him come
Since false pride barred him out"; and yet again
She burned with shame, thinking, "to him such pride
Were matter for a jest. Ah no, he hath seen
My little worth." Even so, one night she sat,
One dark rich summer night, thinking him far
Away, wrapped in the multitudinous cares
Of one that seemed the steersman of the State
Now, thro' the storm of Europe; while her maid
Sang to the lute, and soft sea-breezes brought
Wreathed scents and sighs of secret waves and flowers
Warm through the casement's muffling jasmine bloom.

DRAKE

SONG

T

Nymphs and naiads, come away,
Love lies dead!
Cover the cast-back golden head,
Cover the lovely limbs with may,
And with fairest boughs of green,
And many a rose-wreathed briar spray;
But let no hateful yew be seen
Where Love lies dead.

II

360 Drake

The song ceased. Far away the great sea slept, And all was very still. Only hard by One bird-throat poured its passion through the gloom, And the whole night breathlessly listened.

A twig
Snapped, the song ceased, the intense dumb night was all
One passion of expectation—as if that song
Were prelude, and ere long the heavens and earth
Would burst into one great triumphant psalm.
The song ceased only as if that small bird-throat
Availed no further. Would the next great chord
Ring out from harps in flaming seraph hands
Ranged through the sky? The night watched, breathless,
dumb.

Bess listened. Once again a dry twig snapped Beneath her casement, and a face looked up, Draining her face of blood, of sight, of life, Whispering, a voice from far beyond the stars, Whispering, unutterable joy, the whole Glory of life and death in one small word—Sweetheart!

The jasmine at her casement shook, She knew no more than he was at her side, His arms were round her, and his breath beat warm Against her cheek.

Suddenly, nigh the house,
A deep-mouthed mastiff bayed and a foot crunched
The gravel. "Hark! they are watching for thee," she cried.
He laughed: "There's half of Europe on the watch
Outside for my poor head. "Tis cosier here
With thee; but now"—his face grew grave, he drew
A silken ladder from his doublet—"quick,
Before yon good gamekeeper rounds the house
We must be down." And ere the words were out
Bess reached the path, and Drake was at her side.
Then into the star-stabbed shadow of the woods
They sped, his arm around her. Suddenly
She drew back with a cry, as four grim faces,
With hand to forelock, glimmered in their way.

Laughing she saw their storm-beat friendly smile Welcome their doughty captain in this new Adventure. Far away, once more they heard The mastiff bay: then nearer, as if his nose Were down upon the trail; and then a ery As of a hot pursuit. They reached the brook. Hurrying to the deep. Drake lifted Bess In his arms, and down the watery bed they splashed To baffle the clamouring hunt. Then out of the woods They came, on the seaward side, and Bess, with a shiver, Saw starlight flashing from bare cutlasses. As the mastiff bayed still nearer. Swiftlier now They passed along the bare blunt cliffs and saw The furrow ploughed by that strange cannon-shot Which saved this hour for Bess; down to the beach And starry foam that churned the silver gravel Around an old black lurching boat, a strange Grim Charon's wherry for two lovers' flight, Guarded by old Tom Moone. Drake took her hand, And with one arm around her waist, her breath Warm on his cheek for a moment, in she stepped Daintily o'er the gunwale, and took her seat, His throned princess, beside him at the helm, Backed by the glittering waves, his throned princess, With jewelled throat and glorious hair that seemed Flashing back scents and colours to a sea Which lived but to reflect her loveliness.

Then, all together, with their brandished oars
The seamen thrust as a heavy mounded wave
Lifted the boat; and up the flowering breast
Of the next they soared, then settled at the thwarts,
And the fierce water boiled before their blades
While with Drake's iron hand upon the helm
They plunged and ploughed across the starlit seas
To where a small black lugger at anchor swung,
Dipping her rakish brow i' the liquid moon.
Small was she, but not fangless; for Bess saw,
With half a tremor, the dumb protective grin
Of four grim guns above the tossing boat.

But ere his seamen or his sweetheart knew
What power, as of a wind, bore them along,
Anchor was up, the sails were broken out,
And as they scudded down the dim grey coast
Of a new enchanted world (for now had Love
Made all things new and strange) the skilled musicians
Upraised, at Drake's command, a song to cheer
Their midnight path across that faery sea.

SONG

Т

Sweet, what is love? 'Tis not the crown of kings, Nay, nor the fire of white seraphic wings! Is it a child's heart leaping while he sings?

Even so say I;

Even so say I.

TT

Love like a child around our world doth run, Happy, happy, happy for all that God hath done, Glad of all the little leaves dancing in the sun, Even so say I;

Even so say I; Even so say I.

III

Sweet, what is love? 'Tis not the burning bliss
Angels know in heaven! God blows the world a kiss
Wakes on earth a wild-rose! Ah, who knows not this?

Even so say I;

Even so say I.

IV

Love, love is kind! Can it be far away,
Lost in a light that blinds our little day?
Seems it a great thing? Sweetheart, answer nay;
Even so say I;
Even so say I.

V

Sweet, what is love? The dust beneath our feet, Whence breaks the rose and all the flowers that greet April and May with lips and heart so sweet;

> Even so say I; Even so say I.

VI

Love is the dust whence Eden grew so fair, Dust of the dust that set my lover there, Ay, and wrought the gloriole of Eve's gold hair,

Even so say I; Even so say I.

VII

Also the springing spray, the little topmost flower Swung by the bird that sings a little hour, Earth's climbing spray into the heaven's blue bower, Even so say I; Even so say I.

And stranger, ever stranger, grew the night Around those twain, for whom the fleecy moon Was but a mightier Cleopatra's pearl Dissolving in the rich dark wine of night. While 'mid the tenderer talk of eyes and hands And whispered nothings, his great ocean realm Rolled round their gloomy barge, robing its hulk With splendours Rome and Egypt never knew. Old ocean was his Nile, his mighty queen An English maiden purer than the dawn. His cause the cause of Freedom, his reward The glory of England. Strangely simple, then, Simple as life and death, anguish and love, To Bess appeared those mighty dawning dreams. Whereby he shaped the pageant of the world To a new purpose, strangely simple all Those great new waking tides i' the world's great soul That set towards the fall of tyranny Behind a thunderous roar of ocean triumph O'er burning ships and shattered fleets, while England Grasped with sure hands the sceptre of the sea, That untamed realm of Liberty which none Had looked upon as aught but wilderness Ere this, or even dreamed of as the seat Of power and judgment and high sovereignty Whereby all nations at the last should make One brotherhood, and war should be no more. And ever, as the vision broadened out, The sense of some tremendous change at hand. The approach of vast Armadas and the dawn Of battle, reddening the diviner dawn With clouds, confused it, till once more the song Rang out triumphant o'er the glittering sea.

SONG

Ι

Ye that follow the vision
Of the world's weal afar,
Have ye met with derision
And the red laugh of war;
Yet the thunder shall not hurt you,
Nor the battle-storms dismay;
Tho' the sun in heaven desert you,
"Love will find out the way."

II

When the pulse of hope falters,
When the fire flickers low
On your faith's crumbling altars,
And the faithless gods go;
When the fond hope ye cherished
Cometh, kissing, to betray;
When the last star hath perished,
"Love will find out the way."

TIT

When the last dream bereaveth you,
And the heart turns to stone,
When the last comrade leaveth you
In the desert, alone;
With the whole world before you
Clad in battle-array,
And the starless night o'er you,
"Love will find out the way."

IV

Your dreamers may dream it
The shadow of a dream,
Your sages may deem it
A bubble on the stream;
Yet our kingdom draweth nigher
With each dawn and every day,
Through the earthquake and the fire
"Love will find out the way."

V

Love will find it, tho' the nations
Rise up blind, as of old,
And the new generations
Wage their warfares of gold;
Tho' they trample child and mother
As red clay into the clay,
Where brother wars with brother,
"Love will find out the way."

Dawn, ever bearing some divine increase
Of beauty, love, and wisdom round the world,
Dawn, like a wild-rose in the fields of heaven
Washed grey with dew, awoke, and found the barque
At anchor in a little land-locked bay.
A crisp breeze blew, and all the living sea
Beneath the flower-soft colours of the sky,

Now like a myriad-petalled rose and now Innumerably scalloped into shells Of rosy fire, with dwindling wrinkles edged Fainter and fainter to the unruffled glow And soft white pallor of the distant deep. Shone with a mystic beauty for those twain Who watched the gathering glory; and, in an hour. Drake and sweet Bess, attended by a guard Of four swart seamen, with bare cutlasses. And by the faithful eyes of old Tom Moone, Went up the rough rock-steps and twisted street O' the small white sparkling seaport, tow'rds the church Where, hand in hand, before God's altar they. With steadfast eyes, did plight eternal troth. And so were wedded. Never a chime of bells Had they; but as they passed from out the porch Between the sleeping graves, a skylark soared Above the world in an ecstasy of song. And quivering heavenwards, lost himself in light.

BOOK IX

Now like a white-cliffed fortress England shone Amid the mirk of chaos; for the huge Empire of Spain was but the dusky van Of that dread night beyond all nights and days. Night of the last corruption of a world Fast-bound in misery and iron, with chains Of priest and king and feudal servitude, Night of the fettered flesh and ravaged soul, Night of anarchic chaos, darkening the deep, Swallowing up cities, kingdoms, empires, gods, With vaster gloom approaching, till the sun-Of love was blackened, the moon of faith was blood. All round our England, our small struggling star, Fortress of freedom, rock o' the world's desire. Bearing at last the hope of all mankind. The thickening darkness surged, and close at hand Those first fierce cloudy fringes of the storm,

The Armada sails, gathered their might; and Spain Crouched close behind them with her screaming fires And steaming shambles, Spain, the hell-hag, crouched, Still grasping with red hand the cross of Christ By its great hilt, pointing it like a dagger, Spear-head of the ultimate darkness, at the throat Of England. Under Philip's feet at last Writhed all the Protestant Netherlands, dim coasts Right over against us, whence his panoplies Might suddenly whelm our isle. But all night long. On many a mountain, many a guardian height, From Beachy Head to Skiddaw, little groups Of seamen, torch and battle-lanthorn nigh, Watched by the brooding unlit beacons, piled Of sun-dried gorse, functeal peat, rough logs, Reeking with oil, 'mid sharp scents of the sea, Waste trampled grass and heather and close-cropped thyme, High o'er the thundering coast, among whose rocks Far, far below, the pacing coastguards gazed Steadfastly seaward through the loaded dusk. And through that deepening gloom when, as it seemed, All England held her breath in one grim doubt, Swift rumours flashed from North to South as runs The lightning round a silent thunder-cloud; And there were muttering crowds in the London streets, And hurrying feet in the brooding Eastern ports. All night, dark inns, gathering the country-side, Reddened with clashing auguries of war. All night, in the ships of Plymouth Sound, the soul Of Francis Drake was England, and all night Her singing seamen by the silver quays Polished their guns and waited for the dawn.

But hour by hour that night grew deeper. Spain Watched, cloud by cloud, her huge Armadas grow, Watched, tower by tower, and zone by zone, her fleets Grapple the sky with a hundred hands and drag Whole sea-horizons into her menacing ranks, Joining her powers to the flerce night, while Philip Still strove, with many a crafty word, to lull The fears of Gloriana, till his plots

368 Drake

Were ripe, his armaments complete; and still Great Gloriana took her woman's way. Preferring ever tortuous intrigue To battle, since the stakes had grown so great: Now, more than ever, hoping against hope To find some subtler means of victory: Yet not without swift impulses to strike, Swiftly recalled. Blind, yet not blind, she smiled On Mary of Scotland waiting for her throne, A throne with many a strange dark tremor thrilled Now as the rumoured murderous mines below Converged towards it, mine and countermine, Till the live earth was honeycombed with death. Still with her agate smile, still she delayed, Holding her pirate admiral in the leash Till Walsingham, nav, even the hunchback Burleigh. That crafty king of statesmen, seeing at last The inevitable thunder-crash at hand. Grew heart-sick with delay and ached to shatter The tense tremendous hush that seemed to oppress All hearts, compress all brows, load the broad night With more than mortal menace.

Only once
The night was traversed with one lightning flash,
One rapier stroke from England, at the heart
Of Spain, as swiftly parried, yet no less
A fiery challenge; for Philip's hate and scorn
Growing with his Armada's growth, he lured
With promises of just and friendly trade
A fleet of English corn-ships to relieve
His famine-stricken coast. There as they lay
Within his ports he seized them, one and all,
To fill the Armada's maw.

Whereat the Queen, Passive so long, summoned great Walsingham, And, still averse from open war, despite The battle-hunger burning in his eyes, With one strange swift sharp agate smile she hissed, "Unchain El Draque!"

A lightning flash indeed Was this; for he whose little Golden Hynde With scarce a score of seamen late had scourged The Spanish Main; he whose piratic neek Scarcely the Queen's most wily statecraft saved From Spain's revenge: he, privateer to the eyes Of Spain, but England to all English hearts, Gathered together, in all good jollity, All help and furtherance himself could wish, Before that moon was out, a pirate fleet Whereof the like old ocean had not seen—Eighteen swift cruisers, two great battleships, With pinnaces and store-ships and a force Of nigh three thousand men, wherewith to singe The beard o' the King of Spain.

By night they gathered In marvellous wind-whipt inns nigh Plymouth Sound, Not secretly as, ere the Golden Hynde Burst thro' the West, that small adventurous crew Gathered beside the Thames, tossing the phrase "Pieces of eight" from mouth to mouth, and singing Great songs of the rich Indies, and those tall Enchanted galleons, red with blood and gold, Superb with rubies, glorious as clouds, Clouds in the sun, with mighty press of sail Dragging the sunset out of the unknown world, And staining all the grey old seas of Time With rich romance; but these, though privateers, Or secret knights on Gloriana's quest. Recked not if round the glowing magic door Of every inn the townsfolk grouped to hear The storm-scarred seamen toasting Francis Drake. Nor heeded what blithe urchin faces pressed On each red-curtained magic casement, bright With wild reflection of the fires within. The fires, the glasses, and the singing lips Lifting defiance to the powers of Spain.

SONG

Sing we the Rose,
The flower of flowers most glorious?
Never a storm that blows
Across our English sea,
But its heart breaks out wi' the Rose
On England's flag victorious,
The triumphing flag that flows
Thro' the heavens of Liberty.

Sing we the Rose,

The flower of flowers most beautiful?
Until the world shall end
She blossometh year by year,
Red with the blood that flows
For England's sake, most dutiful,
Wherefore now we bend
Our hearts and knees to her.

Sing we the Rose,

The flower, the flower of war it is,
Where deep i' the midnight gloom
Its waves are the waves of the sea,
And the glare of battle grows,
And red over hulk and spar it is,
Till the grim black broadsides bloom
With our Rose of Victory.

Sing we the Rose,

The flower, the flower of love it is,
Which lovers aye shall sing
And nightingales proclaim;
For O, the heaven that glows,
That glows and burns above it is
Freedom's perpetual Spring,
Our England's faithful fame.

Sing we the Rose,

That Eastward still shall spread for us
Upon the dawn's bright breast,
Red leaves wi' the foam impearled;
And onward ever flows
Till eventide make red for us
A Rose that sinks i' the West
And surges round the world;
Sing we the Rose!

One night as, with his great vice-admiral, Frobisher, his rear-admiral, Francis Knollys, And Thomas Fenner, his flag-captain, Drake Took counsel at his tayern, there came a knock, The door opened, and cold as from the sea The gloom rushed in, and there against the night, Clad as it seemed with wind and cloud and rain, Glittered a courtier whom by face and form All knew for the age's brilliant paladin, Sidney, the king of courtesy, a star Of chivalry. The seamen stared at him, Each with a hand upon the red-lined chart Outspread before them. Then all stared at Drake, Who crouched like a great bloodhound o'er the table, And rose with a strange light burning in his eyes: For he remembered how, three years agone, That other courtier came, with words and smiles Copied from Sidney's self; and in his ears Rang once again the sound of the two-edged sword Upon the desolate Patagonian shore Beneath Magellan's gallows. With a voice So harsh himself scarce knew it, he desired This fair new courtier's errand. With grim eyes He scanned the silken knight from head to foot, While Sidney, smiling graciously, besought Some place in their adventure. Drake's clenched fist Crashed down on the old oak table like a rock, Splintering the wood and dashing his rough wrist With blood, as he thundered, "By the living God. No! We've no room for courtiers, now! We leave All that to Spain." Whereat, seeing Sidney stood Amazed. Drake, drawing nearer, said, "You ask More than you dream: I know you for a knight Most perfect and most gentle, yea, a man Ready to die on any battle-field To save a wounded friend" (even so said Drake, Not knowing how indeed this knight would die), Then fiercely he outstretched his bleeding hand And pointed through the door to where the gloom Glimmered with bursting spray, and the thick night Was all one wandering thunder of hidden seas Rolling out of Eternity: "You'll find No purple fields of Arcady out there, No shepherds piping in those boisterous valleys. No sheep among those roaring mountain-tops. No lists of feudal chivalry. I've heard That voice cry death to courtiers. 'Tis God's voice. Take you the word of one who has occupied His business in great waters. There's no room, Meaning, or reason, office, or place, or name For courtiers on the sea. Does the sea flatter? You cannot bribe it, torture it, or tame it! Its laws are those of the Juggernaut universe. Remorseless-listen to that!"-a mighty wave Broke thundering down the coast: "your hands are white. Your rapier jewelled, can you grapple that? What part have you in all its flaming ways? What share in its fierce gloom? Has your heart broken As those waves break out there? Can you lie down And sleep, as a lion-cub by the old lion, When it shakes its mane out over you to hide you. And leap out with the dawn as I have done? These are big words; but, see, my hand is red: You cannot torture me, I have borne all that; And so I have some kinship with the sea. Some sort of wild alliance with its storms, Its exultations, av. and its great wrath At last, and power upon them. 'Tis the worse For Spain. Be counselled well: come not between My sea and its rich vengeance."

Silently, Bowing his head, Sidney withdrew. But Drake, So fiercely the old grief rankled in his heart,

Summoned his swiftest horseman, bidding him ride, Ride like the wind through the night, straight to the Queen, Praying she would most instantly recall Her truant courtier. Nay, to make all sure, Drake sent a gang of seamen out to crouch Ambushed in woody hollows night he road, Under the sailing moon, there to waylay The Queen's reply, that she might never know It reached him, if it proved against his will.

And swiftly came that truant's stern recall; But Drake, in hourly dread of some new change In Gloriana's mood, slept not by night Or day, till out of roaring Plymouth Sound The pirate fleet swept to the wind-swept main, And took the wind and shook out all its sails. Then with the unfettered sea he mixed his soul In great rejoicing union, while the ships Crashing and soaring o'er the heart-free waves Drave ever straight for Spain.

Water and food They lacked: but the fierce fever of his mind To sail from Plymouth ere the Queen's will changed Had left no time for these. Right on he drave, Determining, though the Queen's old officers Beneath him stood appalled, to take in stores Of all he needed, water, powder, food, By plunder of Spain herself. In Vigo bay, Close to Bayona town, under the cliffs Of Spain's world-wide and thunder-fraught prestige He anchored, with the old sea-touch that wakes Our England still. There, in the tingling ears Of the world he cried, En garde! to the King of Spain. There, ordering out his pinnaces in force. While a great storm, as if he held indeed Heaven's batteries in reserve, growled o'er the sea, He landed. Ere one cumbrous limb of all The monstrous armaments of Spain could move His ships were stored; and ere the sword of Spain Stirred in its crusted sheath, Bayona town

Beheld an empty sea: for like a dream The pirate fleet had vanished, none knew whither, But, in its visible stead, invisible fear Filled the vast rondure of the sea and sky As with the omnipresent soul of Drake. For when Spain saw the small black anchored fleet Ride in her bays, the sight set bounds to fear. She knew at least the ships were oak, the guns Of common range: nor did she dream e'en Drake Could sail two seas at once. Now all her coasts Heard him all night in every bursting wave, His topsails gleamed in every moonlit cloud: His battle-lanthorn glittered in the stars That hung the low horizon. He became A universal menace; yet there followed No sight or sound of him, unless the sea Were that grim soul incarnate. Did it not roar His great commands? The very spray that lashed The cheeks of Spanish seamen lashed their hearts To helpless hatred of him. The wind sang El Draque across the rattling blocks and sheets When storms perplexed them; and when ships went down, As under the fury of his onsetting battle, The drowning sailors cursed him while they sank.

Suddenly a rumour shook the Spanish Court, He has gone once more to the Indies. Santa Cruz, High Admiral of Spain, the most renowned Captain in Europe, clamoured for a fleet Of forty sail instantly to pursue. For unto him whose little Golden Hynde Was weapon enough, now leading such a squadron, The West Indies, the whole Pacific coast, And the whole Spanish Main, lay at his mercy.

And onward over the great grey gleaming sea Swept like a thunder-cloud the pirate fleet With vengeance in its heart. Five years agone, Young Hawkins, in the Cape Verde Islands, met— At Santiago—with such treachery As Drake burned to requite, and from that hour

Was Santiago doomed. His chance had come; Drake swooped upon it, plundered it, and was gone, Leaving the treacherous isle a desolate heap Of smoking ashes in the leaden sea, While onward all those pirate bowsprits plunged Into the golden West, across the broad Atlantic once again: "For I will show." Said Drake, "that Englishmen henceforth will sail Old ocean where they will." Onward they surged, And the great glittering crested majestic waves Jubilantly rushed up to meet the keels, And there was nought around them but the grey Ruin and roar of the huge Atlantic seas. Grey mounded seas, pursuing and pursued, That fly, hounded and hounding on for ever, From empty marge to marge of the grey sky. Over the wandering wilderness of foam, Onward, through storm and death, Drake swept; for now Once more a fell plague gripped the tossing ships. And not by twos and threes as heretofore His crews were minished; but in three black days Three hundred seamen in their shotted shrouds Were cast into the deep. Onward he swept, Implacably, having in mind to strike Spain in the throat at St. Domingo, port Of Hispaniola, a city of far renown, A jewel on the shores of old romance, Palm-shadowed, gated with immortal gold. Queen city of Spain's dominions over sea, And guarded by great guns. Out of the dawn The pirate ships came leaping, grim and black. And ere the Spaniards were awake, the flag Of England floated from their topmost tower. But since he had not troops enough to hold So great a city, Drake entrenched his men Within the Plaza and held the batteries. Thence he demanded ransom, and sent out A boy with flag of truce. The boy's return Drake waited long. Under a sheltering palm He stood, watching the enemies' camp, and lo, Along the hot white purple-shadowed road

Tow'rds him, a crawling shape writhed through the dust Up to his feet, a shape besmeared with blood, A shape that held the stumps up of its wrists And moaned, an eyeless thing, a naked rag Of flesh obscenely mangled, a small face Hideously puckered, shrivelled like a monkey's With lips drawn backward from its teeth.

"Speak, speak, In God's name, speak, what art thou?" whispered Drake, And a sharp cry came, answering his dread, A cry as of a sea-bird in the wind Desolately astray from all earth's shores, "Captain, I am thy boy, only thy boy! See, see, my captain, see what they have done! Captain, I only bore the flag; I only——"

"O, lad, lad, lad," moaned Drake, and, stooping, strove To pillow the mangled head upon his arm. "What have they done to thee, what have they done?" And at the touch the boy screamed, once, and died.

Then like a savage sea with arms uplift
To heaven the wrath of Drake blazed thundering,
"Eternal God, be this the doom of Spain!
Henceforward have no pity. Send the strength
Of Thy great seas into my soul that I
May devastate this empire, this red hell
They make of Thy good earth."

His men drew round,

Staring in horror at the silent shape That daubed his feet. Like a cold wind His words went through their flesh:

"This is the lad

That bore our flag of truce. This hath Spain done.
Look well upon it, draw the smoke of the blood
Up into your nostrils, my companions,
And down into your souls. This makes an end
For Spain! Bring forth the Spanish prisoners
And let me look on them."

Forch they were brought.

A swarthy gorgeous band of soldiers, priests, And sailors, hedged between two sturdy files Of British tars with naked cutlasses. Close up to Drake they halted, under the palm, Gay smiling prisoners, for they thought their friends Had ransomed them. Then they looked up and met A glance that swept athwart them like a sword, Making the blood strain back from their blanched faces Into their quivering hearts, with unknown dread. As that accuser pointed to the shape Before his feet.

"Dogs, will ye lap his blood Before ye die? Make haste; for it grows cold! Ye will not, will not even dabble your hands In that red puddle of flesh, what? Are ve Spaniards? Come, come, I'll look at you, perchance there's one That's but a demi-devil and holds you back." And with the word Drake stepped among their ranks And read each face among the swarthy crew-The gorgeous soldiers, ringleted sailors, priests With rosary and cross, a slender page In scarlet with a cloud of golden hair, And two rope-girdled friars.

The slim page

Drake drew before the throng. "You are young," he said, "Go; take this message to the camp of Spain: Tell them I have a hunger in my soul To look upon the murderers of this boy. To see what eyes they have, what manner of mouths. To touch them and to take their hands in mine. And draw them close to me and smile upon them Until they know my soul as I know theirs. And they grovel in the dust and grope for mercy. Say that, until I get them, every day I'll hang two Spaniards though I dispeople The Spanish Main. Tell them that, every day. I'll burn a portion of their city down, Then find another city and burn that. And then burn others till I burn away Their empire from the world, ay, till I reach

The imperial throne of Philip with my fires, And send it shricking down to burn in hell For ever. Go!"

Then Drake turned once again
To face the Spanish prisoners. With a voice
Cold as the passionless utterance of Fate
His grim command went forth. "Now, provost-marshal,
Begin with yon two friars, in whose faces
Chined like singed swine, and eyed with the spent coals
Of filthy living, sweats the glory of Spain.
Strip off their leprous rags
And twist their ropes around their throats and hang them
High over the Spanish camp for all to see.
At dawn I'll choose two more."

BOOK X

Across the Atlantic

Great rumours rushed as of a mighty wind, The wind of the spirit of Drake. But who shall tell In this cold age the power that he became Who drew the universe within his soul And moved with cosmic forces? Though the deep Divided it from Drake, the gorgeous court Of Philip shuddered away from the streaming coasts As a wind-cuffed field of golden wheat. The King. Bidding his guests to a feast in his own ship On that wind-darkened sea, was made a mock, As one by one his ladies proffered excuse For fear of That beyond. Round Europe now Ballad and story told how in the cabin Of Francis Drake there hung a magic glass Wherein he saw the fleets of every foe And all that passed aboard them. Rome herself, Perplexed that this proud heretic should prevail, Fostered a darker dream, that Drake had bought. Like old Norse wizards, power to loose or bind The winds at will.

And now a wilder tale Flashed o'er the deep—of a distant blood-red dawn O'er San Domingo, where the embattled troops Of Spain and Drake were met-but not in war-Met in the dawn, by his compelling will, To offer up a sacrifice. Yea, there Between the hosts, the hands of Spain herself Slaughtered the Spanish murderers of the boy Who had borne Drake's flag of truce; offered them up As a blood-offering and an expiation Lest Drake, with that dread alchemy of his soul, Should e'en transmute the dust beneath their feet To one same substance with the place of pain And whelm them suddenly in the eternal fires. Rumour on rumour rushed across the sea, Large mockeries, and one most bitter of all, Wormwood to Philip, of how Drake had stood I' the governor's house at San Domingo, and seen A mighty scutcheon of the King of Spain Whereon was painted the terrestrial globe, And on the globe a mighty steed in act To spring into the heavens, and from its mouth Streaming like smoke a scroll, and on the scroll Three words of flame and fury—Non sufficit Orbis—of how Drake and his seamen stood Gazing upon it, and could not forbear From summoning the Spaniards to expound Its meaning, whereupon a hurricane roar Of mirth burst from those bearded British lips, And that immortal laughter shook the world.

So, while the imperial warrior eyes of Spain Watched, every hour, her vast Armada grow Readier to launch and shatter with one stroke Our island's frail defence, fear gripped her still, For there came sounds across the heaving sea Of secret springs unsealed, forces unchained, A mustering of deep elemental powers, A sound as of the burgeoning of boughs In universal April and dead hearts

380 Drake

Uprising from their tombs: a mighty cry Of resurrection, surging through the souls Of all mankind. For now the last wild tale Swept like another dawn across the deep: And, in that dawn, men saw the slaves of Spain, The mutilated negroes of the mines. With gaunt backs wealed and branded, scarred and seared By whip and iron, in Spain's brute lust for gold, Saw them, at Drake's great liberating word, Burst from their chains, erect, uplifting hands Of rapture to the glad new light that then, Then first, began to struggle thro' the clouds And crown all manhood with a sacred crown August—a light which, though from age to age Clouds may obscure it, grows and still shall grow. Until that Kingdom come, that grand Communion, That Commonweal, that Empire, which still draws Nigher with every hour, that Federation, That turning of the wasteful strength of war To accomplish large and fruitful tasks of peace. That gathering up of one another's loads Whereby the weak are strengthened and the strong Made stronger in the increasing good of all. Then, suddenly, it seemed, as he had gone, A ship came stealing into Plymouth Sound And Drake was home again, but not to rest; For scarce had he cast anchor ere the road To London rang beneath the flying hoofs That bore his brief despatch to Burleigh, saying— "We have missed the Plate Fleet by but twelve hours' sail. The reason being best known to God. No less We have given a cooling to the King of Spain. There is a great gap opened which, methinks, Is little to his liking. We have sacked The towns of his chief Indies, burnt their ships, Captured great store of gold and precious stones, Three hundred pieces of artillery, The more part brass. Our loss is heavy indeed. Under the hand of God, eight hundred men. Three parts of them by sickness. Captain Moone. My trusty old companion, he that struck

The first blow in the South Seas at a Spaniard,
Died of a grievous wound at Cartagena.

My fleet and I are ready to strike again
At once, where'er the Queen and England please.

I pray for her commands, and those with speed,
That I may strike again.'' Outside the scroll
These words were writ once more—"My Queen's commands
I much desire, your servant, Francis Drake.''

This terse despatch the hunchback Burleigh read Thrice over, with the broad eliff of his brow Bending among his books. Thrice he assayed To steel himself with caution as of old; And thrice, as a glorious lightning running along And flashing between those simple words, he saw The great new power that lay at England's hand. An ocean-sovereignty, a power unknown Before, but dawning now; a power that swept All earth's old plots and counterplots away Like straws; the germ of an unmeasured force New-born, that laid the source of Spanish might At England's mercy! Could that force but grow Ere Spain should nip it, ere the mighty host That waited in the Netherlands even now, That host of thirty thousand men encamped Round Antwerp, under Parma, should embark Convoyed by that Invincible Armada To leap at England's throat! Thrice he assayed To think of England's helplessness, her ships Little and few. Thrice he assayed to quench With caution the high furnace of his soul Which Drake had kindled. As he read the last Rough simple plea, I wait my Queen's commands, His deep eyes flashed with glorious tears.

He leapt

To his feet and cried aloud, "Before my God, I am proud, I am very proud for England's sake! This Drake is a teriible man to the King of Spain."

And still, still, Gloriana, brooding darkly On Mary of Scotland's doom, who now at last

Was plucked from out her bosom like a snake Hissing of war with France, a queenly snake, A Lilith in whose lovely gleaming folds And sexual bonds the judgment of mankind Writhes even yet half-strangled, meting out Weld executions on the maiden Queen Who onenched those jewelled eyes and mixt with dust That Thite and crimson, who with cold sharp steel In substance and in spirit, severed the neck And straightened out those glittering supple coils For ever, though for evermore will men Lie subject to the unforgotten gleam Of diamond eves and cruel crimson mouth, And curse the sword-bright intellect that struck Like lightning far through Europe and the world For England, when smid the embattled fury Of world-wide empires. England stood alone. Still she held back from war, still disavowed The deeds of Drake to Spain; and yet once more Philip, resolved at last never to swerve By one digressive stroke, one ell or inch From his own patient, sure, laborious path. Appented her suave plea, and with all speed Pressed on his huge emprise until it seemed His coasts groaned with grim bulks of cannonry, Thick loaded hulks of thunder and towers of doom; And, all round Answerp. Parms still prepared To hard such armies o'er the rolling sea As in all history hardly the earth herself Felt shake with terror her own green hills and plains, I must my Queen's comanda! Despite the rlea Urged every hour upon her with the fire That burned for action in the soul of Drake, Still she delayed, till on one darkling eve She gave him audience in that glimmering room Where first he saw her. Strangely sounded there The seaman's rough strong passion as he poured His heart before her pleading-"Every hour Is one more victory lost," and only heard The bitter answer-" May, but every hour Is a breath snatched from the unconquirable

Doom, that awaits us if we are instead to war.
Yea, and who knows?—through Spain may intrease sword,
Its point is not institutely bared.
Aminist the breast of England. As she spain.
The wines without claims treat with clash of bells,
There was a gleam of torthe sand a root—
Many the trainers of the North Spain.
Gold one the Queen.

Her head bent fown she went. Pity me, friend, though I be that in these My beart is woman, and I am som rossed On every side -So cland and France and Spain Beset me, and I know not where to turn. Even as she spake, there came a Limited stop Into that dim rich tham er. Walsa tham Stood there, before Ler, without the tra-Thrusting a letter forth: "At last the crud. "Your Majesty may read the full intent Of priestly Spain. Here, plainly written out Upon this paper, worth your kingsome s grown, This letter, stolen by a trusty spy, Out of the immost chamber of the Pape Sixtus himself, here is your murder planned Blame not your Ministers who with such laste Plucked out this wiper. Many them your breast's Read here—h w, with his thirty the same m a. The pick of Europe Parma parts the Stors. While Ireland, grasped in their Armail a line And the Isle of Wight against the west and south Becume their base.

Rome Rome and R. me again.

And always Rome, she must red.

In England light she thousands yet. She bath struck Her carse our with point if ing r as m.

Cursed me down and away to the both mess pit.

Her shadow like the shadow of doubs or sales.

The shadow of that have event at me.

Darkens the seas already and the wind is on my cheek that shades my large of the shadow of that housands here in Ing me both and tred Englishmen. They will stand by Rome.

"'Fore God,"

Cried Walsingham, "my Queen, you do them wrong! There is another Rome-not this of Spain Which lurks to pluck the world back into darkness And stab it there for gold. There is a City Whose eves are tow'rd the morning; on whose heights Blazes the Cross of Christ above the world: A Rome that shall wage warfare yet for God In the dark days to come, a Rome whose thought Shall march with our humanity and be proud To cast old creeds like seed into the ground, Watch the strange shoots and foster the new flower Of faiths we know not yet. Is this a dream? I speak as one by knighthood bound to speak: For even this day-and my heart burns with it-I heard the Catholic gentlemen of England Speaking in grave assembly. At one breath Of peril to our island, why, their swords Leapt from their scabbards, and their cry went up To split the heavens—God save our English Queen!" Even as he spake there passed the rushing gleam Of torches once again, and as they stood Silently listening, all the winds ran wild With clamouring bells, and a great cry went up-God save Elizabeth, our English Queen!

"I'll vouch for some two hundred Catholic throats
Among that thousand," whispered Walsingham
Eagerly, with his eyes on the Queen's face.
Then, seeing it brighten, fervently he cried,
Pressing the swift advantage home, "O, Madam,
The heart of England now is all on fire!
We are one people, as we have not been
In all our history, all prepared to die
Around your throne. Madam, you are beloved
As never yet was English king or queen!"
She looked at him, the tears in her keen eyes
Glittered—"And I am very proud," she said,
"But if our enemies command the world,
And we have one small island and no more . . ."
She ceased; and Drake, in a strange voice, hoarse and low,

Trembling with passion deeper than all speech, Cried out—"No more than the great ocean-sea Which makes the enemies' coast our frontier now: No more than that great Empire of the deep Which rolls from Pole to Pole, washing the world With thunder, that great Empire whose command This day is yours to take. Hear me, my Queen, This is a dream, a new dream, but a true: For mightier days are dawning on the world Than heart of man hath known. If England hold The sea, she holds the hundred thousand gates That open to futurity. She holds The highway of all ages. Argosies Of unknown glory set their sails this day For England out of ports beyond the stars. Ay, on the sacred seas we ne'er shall know They hoist their sails this day by peaceful quays. Great gleaming wharves in the perfect Cityof God, If she but claim her heritage."

He ceased;
And the deep dream of that new realm the sea,
Through all the soul of Gloriana surged,
A moment, then with splendid eyes that filled
With fire of sunsets far away, she cried
(Faith making her a child, yet queenlier still)
"Yea, claim it thou for me!"

A moment there Trembling she stood. Then, once again, there passed A rush of torches through the gloom without, And a great cry "God save Elizabeth, God save our English Queen!"

"Yea go, then, go,"
She said, "God speed you now, Sir Francis Drake,
Not as a privateer, but with full powers,
My Admiral-at-the-Seas!"

Without a word
Drake bent above her hand and, ere she knew it,
His eyes from the dark doorway flashed farewell
And he was gone. But ere he leapt to saddle
Walsingham stood at his stirrup, muttering "Ride,
Ride now like hell to Plymouth; for the Queen

386 Drake

Is hard beset, and ere ye are out at sea
Her mood will change. The friends of Spain will move
Earth and the heavens for your recall. They'll tempt her
With their false baits of peace, though I shall stand
Here at your back through thick and thin; farewell!"
Fire flashed beneath the hoofs and Drake was gone.

Scarce had he vanished in the night than doubt
Once more assailed the Queen. The death of Mary
Had brought e'en France against her. Walsingham,
And Burleigh himself, prime mover of that death,
Being held in much disfavour for it, stood
As helpless. Long ere Drake or human power,
They thought, could put to sea, a courier sped
To Plymouth bidding Drake forbear to strike
At Spain, but keep to the high seas, and lo,
The roadstead glittered empty. Drake was gone!

Gone! Though the friends of Spain had poured their gold To thin his ranks, and every hour his crews Deserted, he had laughed—"Let Spain buy scum! Next to an honest seaman I love best An honest landsman. What more goodly task Than teaching brave men seamanship?" He had filled His ships with soldiers! Out in the teeth of the gale That raged against him he had driven. In vain, Amid the boisterous laughter of the quays, A pinnace dashed in hot pursuit and met A roaring breaker and came hurtling back With oars and spars all trailing in the foam, A tangled mass of wreckage and despair. Sky swept to stormy sky: no sail could live In that great yeast of waves; but Drake was gone!

Then, once again, across the rolling sea
Great rumours rushed of how he had sacked the port
Of Cadiz and had swept along the coast
To Lisbon, where the whole Armada lay.
Had snapped up prizes under its very nose,
And taunted Santa Cruz, High Admiral
Of Spain, striving to draw him out for fight,
And offering, if his course should lie that way,

To convoy him to Britain, taunted him So bitterly that for once, in the world's eyes, A jest had power to kill; for Santa Cruz Died with the spleen of it, since he could not move Before the appointed season. Then there came Flying back home, the Queen's old Admiral Borough, deserting Drake and all aghast At Drake's temerity: "For," he said, "this man, Thrust o'er my head, against all precedent, Bade me follow him into harbour mouths A-flame with cannon like the jaws of death, Whereat I much demurred; and straightway Drake Clapped me in irons, me-an officer And Admiral of the Queen; and, though my voice Was all against it, plunged into the pit Without me, left me with some word that burns And rankles in me still, making me fear The man was mad, some word of lonely seas, A desert island and a mutineer And dead Magellan's gallows. Sirs, my life Was hardly safe with him. Why, he resolved To storm the Castle of St. Vincent, sirs, A castle on a cliff, grinning with guns, Well known impregnable! The Spaniards fear Drake: but to see him land below it and bid Surrender, sirs, the strongest fort of Spain Without a blow, they laughed! And straightway he, With all the fury of Satan, turned that cliff To hell itself. He sent down to the ships For faggots, broken oars, beams, bowsprits, masts, And piled them up against the outer gates, Higher and higher, and fired them. There he stood Amid the smoke and flame and cannon-shot, This Admiral, like a common seamen, black With soot, besmeared with blood, his naked arms Full of great faggots, labouring like a giant And roaring like Apollyon. Sirs, he is mad! But did he take it, say you? Yea, he took it, The mightiest stronghold on the coast of Spain, Took it and tumbled all its big brass guns Clattering over the cliffs into the sea.

388 Drake

But, sirs, ye need not raise a cheer so loud! It is not warfare. 'Twas a madman's trick, A devil's!'

Then the rumour of a storm That scattered the fleet of Drake to the four winds Disturbed the heart of England, as his ships Came straggling into harbour, one by one, Saying they could not find him. Then, at last, When the storm burst in its earth-shaking might Along our coasts, one night of rolling gloom His cannon woke old Plymouth. In he came Across the thunder and lightning of the sea With his grim ship of war and, close behind, A shadow like a mountain or a cloud Torn from the heaven-high panoplies of Spain, A captured galleon loomed, and round her prow A blazoned scroll, whence (as she neared the quays Which many a lanthorn swung from brawny fist Yellowed) the sudden crimson of her name San Filippe flashed o'er the white sea of faces. And a rending shout went skyward that outroared The blanching breakers—"'Tis the heart of Spain! The great San Filippe!" Overhead she towered. The mightiest ship afloat; and in her hold The riches of a continent, a prize Greater than earth had ever known; for there Not only ruby and pearl like ocean-beaches Heaped on some wizard coast in that dim hull Blazed to the lanthorn-light; not only gold Gleamed, though of gold a million would not buy Her store; but in her cabin lay the charts And secrets of the wild unwhispered wealth Of India, secrets that splashed London wharves With coloured dreams and made her misty streets Flame like an Eastern City when the sun Shatters itself on jewelled domes and spills Its crimson wreckage thro' the silvery palms. And of those dreams the far East India quest Began: the first foundation-stone was laid Of our great Indian Empire, and a star Began to tremble on the brows of England That time can never darken.

But now the seas
Darkened indeed with menace; now at last
The cold wind of the black approaching wings
Of Azrael crept across the deep: the storm
Throbbed with their thunderous pulse, and ere that moon
Waned, a swift gunboat foamed into the Sound
With word that all the Invincible Armada
Was hoisting sail for England.

Even now. Elizabeth, torn a thousand ways, withheld The word for which Drake pleaded as for life, That he might meet them ere they left their coasts, Meet them or ever they reached the Channel, meet them Now, or-"Too late! Too late!" At last his voice Beat down e'en those that blindly dinned her ears With chatter of meeting Spain on British soil; And swiftly she commanded (seeing once more The light that burned amid the approaching gloom In Drake's deep eyes) Lord Howard of Effingham, High Admiral of England, straight to join him At Plymouth Sound. "How many ships are wanted?" She asked him, thinking "we are few, indeed!" "Give me but sixteen merchantmen," he said, "And but four battleships, by the mercy of God, I'll answer for the Armada!" Out to sea They swept, in the teeth of a gale; but vainly Drake Strove to impart the thought wherewith his mind Travailed—to win command of the ocean-sea By bursting on the fleets of Spain at once Even as they left their ports, not as of old To hover in a vain dream of defence Round fifty threatened points of British coast, But Howard, clinging to his old-world order, Flung out his ships in a loose, long, straggling line Across the Channel, waiting, wary, alert, But powerless thus as a string of scattered sea-gulls Beating against the storm. Then, flying to meet them, A merchantman brought terror down the wind, With news that she had seen that monstrous host Stretching from sky to sky, great hulks of doom, Dragging death's midnight with them o'er the sea

390 Drake

Tow'rds England. Up to Howard's flag-ship Drake In his immortal battle-ship—Revenge, Rushed thro' the foam, and thro' the swirling seas His pinnace dashed alongside. On to the decks O' the tossing flag-ship, like a very Viking Shaking the surf and rainbows of the spray From sun-smit lion-like mane and beard he stood Before Lord Howard in the escutcheoned poop And poured his heart out like the rending sea In passionate wave on wave:

"If vonder fleet Once reach the Channel, hardly the mercy of God Saves England! I would pray with my last breath. Let us beat up to windward of them now. And handle them before they reach the Channel." "Nay; but we cannot bare the coast," cried Howard, "Nor have we stores of powder or food enough!" "My lord," said Drake, with his great arm outstretched. "There is food enough in yonder enemy's ships, And powder enough and cannon-shot enough! We must re-victual there. Look! look!" he cried, And pointed to the heavens. As for a soul That by sheer force of will compels the world To work his bidding, so it seemed the wind That blew against them slowly veered. The sails Quivered, the skies revolved. A northerly breeze Awoke and now, behind the British ships, Blew steadily tow'rds the unseen host of Spain. "It is the breath of God," cried Drake: "they lie Wind-bound, and we may work our will with them. Signal the word, Lord Howard, and drive down!" And as a man convinced by heaven itself Lord Howard ordered, straightway, the whole fleet To advance.

And now, indeed, as Drake foresaw, The Armada lay, beyond the dim horizon, Wind-bound and helpless in Corunna bay, At England's mercy, could her fleet but draw Nigh enough, with its fire-ships and great guns To windward. Nearer, nearer, league by league The ships of England came; till Ushant lay

Some seventy leagues behind. Then, yet once more The wind veered, straight against them. To remain Beating against it idly was to starve:
And, as a man whose power upon the world Fails for one moment of exhausted will,
Drake, gathering up his forces as he went
For one more supreme effort, turned his ship
Tow'rds Plymouth, and retreated with the rest.

There, while the ships refitted with all haste And axe and hammer rang, one golden eve Just as the setting sun began to fringe The clouds with crimson, and the creaming waves Were one wild riot of fairy rainbows. Drake Stood with old comrades on the close-cropped green Of Plymouth Hoe, playing a game of bowls. Far off unseen, a little barque, full-sail, Struggled and leapt and strove tow'rds Plymouth Sound. Noteless as any speckled herring-gull Flickering between the white flakes of the waves. A group of schoolboys with their satchels lav Stretched on the green, gazing with great wide eves Upon their seamen heroes, as like gods Disporting with the battles of the world They loomed, tossing black bowls like cannon-balls Against the rosy West, or lounged at ease With faces olive-dark against that sky Laughing, while from the neighboring inn mine host, White aproned and blue-jerkined, hurried out With foaming cups of sack, and they drank deep. Tossing their heads back under the golden clouds And burying their bearded lips. The hues That slashed their doublets, for the boy's bright eyes (Even as the gleams of Grecian cloud or moon Revealed the old gods) were here rich dusky streaks Of splendour from the Spanish Main, that shone But to proclaim these heroes. There a boy More bold crept nearer to a slouched hat thrown Upon the green, and touched the silver plume, And felt as if he had touched a sunset-isle Of feathery palms beyond a crimson sea.

Another stared at the blue rings of smoke A storm-scarred seaman puffed from a long pipe Primed with the strange new herb they had lately found In far Virginia. But the little ship Now plunging into Plymouth Bay none saw. E'en when she had anchored and her straining boat Had touched the land, and the boat's crew over the quays Leapt with a shout, scarce was there one to heed. A seaman, smiling, swaggered out of the inn Swinging in one brown hand a gleaming cage Wherein a big green parrot chattered and clung Fluttering against the wires. A troop of girls With arms linked paused to watch the game of bowls; And now they flocked around the cage, while one With rosy finger tempted the horny beak To bite. Close overhead a sea-mew flashed Seaward. Once, from an open window, soft Through trellised leaves, not far away, a voice Floated, a voice that flushed the cheek of Drake, The voice of Bess, bending her glossy head Over the broidery frame, in a quiet song.

The song ceased. Still, with rainbows in their eyes, The schoolboys watched the bowls like cannon-balls Roll from the hand of gods along the turf.

Suddenly, tow'rds the green, a little cloud Of seamen, shouting, stumbling, as they ran Drew all eyes on them. The game ceased. A voice Rough with the storms of many an ocean roared "Drake! Cap'en Drake! The Armada! They are in the Channel! We sighted them—A line of battleships! We could not see An end of them. They stretch from north to south Like a great storm of clouds, glinting with guns, From sky to sky!"

So, after all his strife,
The wasted weeks had tripped him, the fierce hours
Of pleading for the sea's command, great hours
And golden moments, all were lost. The fleet
Of Spain had won the Channel without a blow.

All eyes were turned on Drake, as he stood there
A giant against the sunset and the sea
Looming, alone. Far off, the first white star
Gleamed in a rosy space of heaven. He tossed
A grim black ball i' the lustrous air and laughed,—
"Come, lads," he said, "we've time to finish the game"

BOOK XI

FEW minutes, and well wasted those, were spent On that great game of bowls; for well knew Drake What panic threatened Plymouth, since his fleet Lay trapped there by the black head-wind that blew Straight up the Sound, and Plymouth town itself, Except the ships won seaward ere the dawn, Lay at the Armada's merey. Never a seaman Of all the sea-dogs clustered on the quays, And all the captains clamouring round Lord Howard, Hoped that one ship might win to the open sea: At dawn, they thought, the Armada's rolling guns To windward, in an hour, must shatter them, Huddled in their red slaughter-house like sheep.

Now was the great sun sunken and the night Dark. Far to Westward, like the soul of man Fighting blind nature, a wild flare of red Upon some windy headland suddenly leapt And vanished flickering into the clouds. Again It leapt and vanished: then all at once it streamed Steadily as a crimson torch upheld By Titan hands to heaven. It was the first Beacon! A sudden silence swept along The seething quays, and in their midst appeared Drake.

Then the jubilant thunder of his voice Rolled, buffeting the sea-wind far and nigh, And ere they knew what power as of a sea. Surged through them, his immortal battle-ship Revenge had flung out cables to the quays,

And while the seamen, as he had commanded. Knotted thick ropes together, he stood apart (For well he knew what panic threatened still) Whittling idly at a scrap of wood, And carved a little boat out for the child Of some old sea-companion. So great and calm a master of the world Seemed Drake that, as he whittled, and the chips Fluttered into the blackness over the quay, Men said that in this hour of England's need Each tiny flake turned to a battle-ship: For now began the lanthorns, one by one. To glitter, and half-reveal the shadowy hulks Before him.—So the huge old legend grew. Not all unworthy the Homeric age Of gods and god-like men.

St. Michael's Mount. Answering the first wild beacon far away, Rolled crimson thunders to the stormy sky! The ropes were knotted. Through the panting dark Great heaving lines of seamen all together Hauled with a shout, and all together again Hauled with a shout against the roaring wind; And slowly, slowly, onward tow'rds the sea Moved the Revenge, and seaward ever heaved The brawny backs together, and in their midst. Suddenly, as they slackened, Drake was there Hauling like any ten, and with his heart Doubling the strength of all, giving them joy Of battle against those odds,—ay, till they found Delight in the burning tingle of the blood That even their hardy hands must feel besmear The harsh, rough, straining ropes. There as they toiled, Answering a score of hills, old Beachy Head Streamed like a furnace to the rolling clouds Then all around the coast each windy ness And craggy mountain kindled. Peak from peak Caught the tremendous fire, and passed it on Round the bluff East and the black mouth of Thames.— Up, northward to the waste wild Yorkshire fells And gloomy Cumberland, where, like a giant,

Great Skiddaw grasped the red tempestuous brand. And thrust it up against the reeling heavens. Then all night long, inland, the wandering winds Ran wild with clamour and clash of startled bells: All night the cities seethed with torches, flashed With twenty thousand flames of burnished steel; While over the trample and thunder of hooves blazed forth The lightning of wild trumpets. Lonely lanes Of country darkness, lit by cottage doors Entwined with rose and honeysuckle, roared Like mountain-torrents now-East, West, and South. As to the coasts with pike and musket streamed The trained bands, horse and foot, from every town And every hamlet. All the shaggy hills From Milford Haven to the Downs of Kent, And up to Humber, gleamed with many a hedge Of pikes between the beacon's crimson glares; While in red London forty thousand men, In case the Invader should prevail, drew swords Around their Queen. All night in dark St. Paul's, While round it rolled a multitudinous roar As of the Atlantic on a Western beach. And all the leaning London streets were lit With fury of torches, rose the passionate prayer Of England's peril:

O Lord God of Hosts, Let Thine enemies know that Thou hast taken England into Thine hands!

The mighty sound Rolled, billowing round the kneeling aisles, then died, Echoing up the heights. A voice, far off, As on the cross of Calvary, caught it up And poured the prayer o'er that deep hush, alone: We beseech Thee, O God, to go before our armies, Bless and prosper them both by land and sca! Grant unto them Thy victory, O God, As Thou usedst to do to Thy children when they please Thee! All power, all strength, all victory come from Thee! Then from the lips of all those thousands burst A sound as from the rent heart of an ocean, One tumult, one great rushing storm of wings

396

Cleaving the darkness round the Gates of Heaven: Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses; But we will remember Thy name, O Lord our God!

So, while at Plymouth Sound her seamen toiled All through the night, and scarce a ship had won Seaward, the heart of England cried to God. All night, while trumpets yelled and blared without. And signal cannon shook the blazoned panes, And billowing multitudes went thundering by, Amid that solemn pillared hush arose From lips of kneeling thousands one great prayer Storming the Gates of Heaven! O Lord, our God. Heavenly Father, have mercy upon our Queen, To whom Thy far dispersèd flock do fly In the anguish of their souls. Behold, behold, How many princes band themselves against her. How long Thy servant hath laboured to them for peace. How proudly they prepare themselves for battle! Arise, therefore! Maintain Thine own cause, Judge Thou between her and her enemies! She seeketh not her own honour, but Thine, Not the dominions of others, but Thy truth, Not bloodshed but the saving of the afflicted! O rend the heavens, therefore, and come down. Deliver Thy people! To vanguish is all one with Thee, by few Or many, want or wealth, weakness or strength. The cause is Thine, the enemies Thine, the afflicted Thine! The honour, victory, and triumph Thine! Grant her people now one heart, one mind, One strength. Give unto her councils and her captains Wisdom and courage strongly to withstand The forces of her enemies, that the fame And glory of Thy Kingdom may be spread Unto the ends of the world. Father, we crave This in Thy mercy, for the precious death Of Thy dear Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ! A men.

And as the dreadful dawn thro' mist-wreaths broke, And out of Plymouth Sound at last, with cheeze

Ringing from many a thousand throats, there struggled Six little ships, all that the night's long toil Had warped down to the sea (but leading them The ship of Drake) there rose one ocean-cry From all those worshippers—Let God arise, And let His enemies be scattered!

Under the leaden fogs of that new dawn, Empty and cold, indifferent as death, The sea heaved strangely to the seamen's eyes, Seeing all round them only the leaden surge Wrapped in wet mists or flashing here and there With crumbling white. Against the cold wet wind Westward the little ships of England beat With short tacks, close inshore, striving to win The windward station of the threatening battle That neared behind the veil. Six little ships, No more, beat Westward, even as all mankind Beats up against that universal wind Whereon like withered leaves all else is blown Down one wide way to death: the soul alone, Whether at last it wins, or faints and fails, Stems the dark tide with its intrepid sails. Close-hauled, with many a short tack, struggled and strained, North-west, South-west, the ships; but ever Westward gained Some little way with every tack; and soon, While the prows plunged beneath the grey-gold noon, Lapped by the crackling waves, even as the wind Died down a little, in the mists behind Stole out from Plymouth Sound the struggling score Of ships that might not win last night to sea. They followed; but the Six went on before, Not knowing, alone, for God and Liberty.

Now, as they tacked North-west, the sullen roar Of reefs crept out, or some strange tinkling sound Of sheep upon the hills. South-west once more The bo'sun's whistle swung their bowsprits round; 398 Drake

South-west until the long low lapping splash
Was all they heard, of keels that still ran out
Seaward, then with one muffled heave and crash
Once more the whistles brought their sails about.

And now the noon began to wane; the west
With slow rich colours filled and shadowy forms,
Dark curdling wreaths and fogs with crimsoned breast,
And tangled zones of dusk like frozen storms,

Motionless, flagged with sunset, hulled with doom!
Motionless? Nay, across the darkening deep
Surely the whole sky moved its gorgeous gloom
Onward; and like the curtains of a sleep

The red fogs crumbled, mists dissolved away!

There, like death's secret dawning thro' a dream,
Great thrones of thunder dusked the dying day,
And, higher, pale towers of cloud began to gleam.

There, in one heaven-wide storm, great masts and clouds
Of sail crept slowly forth, the ships of Spain!
From North to South, their tangled spars and shrouds
Controlled the slow wind as with bit and rein;
Onward they rode in insolent disdain
Sighting the little fleet of England there,
While o'er the sullen splendour of the main
Three solemn guns tolled all their host to prayer,
And their great ensign blazoned all the doom-fraught air.

The sacred standard of their proud crusade
Up to the mast-head of their flag-ship soared:
On one side knelt the Holy Mother-maid,
On one the crucified Redeemer poured
His blood, and all their kneeling hosts adored
Their saints, and clouds of incense heavenward streamed,
While pomp of cannonry and pike and sword
Down long sea-lanes of mocking menace gleamed,
And chant of priests rolled out o'er seas that darkly dreamed.

Who comes to fight for England? Is it ye,
Six little straws that dance upon the foam?
Ay, sweeping o'er the sunset-crimsoned sea
Let the proud pageant in its glory come,
Leaving the sunset like a hecatomb
Of souls whose bodies yet endure the chain!
Let slaves, by thousands, branded, scarred and dumb,
In those dark galleys grip their oars again,
And o'er the rolling deep bring on the pomp of Spain;—

Bring on the pomp of royal paladins
(For all the princedoms of the land are there!)
And for the gorgeous purple of their sins
The papal pomp bring on with psalm and prayer:
Nearer the splendour heaves; can ye not hear
The rushing foam, not see the blazoned arms,
And black-faced hosts thro' leagues of golden air
Crowding the decks, muttering their beads and charms

Crowding the decks, muttering their beads and charms To where, in furthest heaven, they thicken like locust-swarms?

Blazon the skies with royal Aragon,
Beneath Oquendo let old ocean reel.

The purple pomp of priestly Rome bring on;
And let her censers dusk the dying sun,
The thunder of her banners on the breeze
Following Sidonia's glorious galleon
Deride the sleeping thunder of the seas,
While twenty thousand warriors chant her litanies.

Bring on the pomp and pride of old Castille,

Lo, all their decks are kneeling! Sky to sky
Responds! It is their solemn evening hour.

Salve Regina, though the daylight die,
Salve Regina, though the darkness lour;

Have they not still the kingdom and the power?

Salve Regina, hark, their thousands cry,

From where like clouds to where like mountains tower
Their crowded galleons looming far or nigh,

Salve Regina, hark, what distant seas reply!

What distant seas, what distant ages hear?

Bring on the pomp! the sun of Spain goes down:
The moon but swells the tide of praise and prayer;
Bring on the world-wide pomp of her renown;
Let darkness crown her with a starrier crown,
And let her watch the fierce waves crouch and fawn
Round those huge hulks from which her cannon frown,
While close inshore the wet sea-mists are drawn
Round England's Drake: then wait, in triumph, for the dawn.

The sun of Rome goes down; the night is dark!

Still are her thousands praying, still their cry
Ascends from the wide waste of waters, hark!

AVE MARIA, darker grows the sky!

AVE MARIA, those about to die

Salute thee! Nay, what wandering winds blaspheme

With random gusts of chilling prophecy

Against the solemn sounds that heavenward stream!

The night is come at last. Break not the splendid dream.

But through the misty darkness, close inshore, North-west, South-west, and ever Westward strained The little ships of England. All night long, As down the coast the reddening beacons leapt, The crackle and lapping splash of tacking keels. The bo'suns' low sharp whistles and the whine Of ropes, mixing with many a sea-bird's cry Disturbed the darkness, waking vague swift fears Among the mighty hulks of Spain that lay Nearest, then fading through the mists inshore North-west, then growing again, but farther down Their ranks to Westward with each dark return And dark departure, till the rearmost rank Of grim sea-castles heard the swish and creak Pass plashing seaward thro' the wet sea-mists To windward now of all that monstrous host, Then heard no more than wandering sea-birds' cries Wheeling around their leagues of lanthorn-light, Or heave of waters, waiting for the dawn.

Dawn, everlasting and almighty dawn Rolled o'er the waters. The grey mists were fled. See, in their recking heaven-wide crescent drawn Those masts and spars and cloudy sails, outspread Like one great sulphurous tempest soaked with red, In vain withstand the march of brightening skies: The dawn sweeps onward and the night is dead, And lo, to windward, what bright menace lies, What glory kindles now in England's wakening eyes?

There, on the glittering plains of open sea, To windward now, behind the fleets of Spain. Two little files of ships are tossing free, Free of the winds and of the wind-swept main: Were they not trapped? Who brought them forth again. Free of the great new fields of England's war, With sails like blossoms shining after rain, And guns that sparkle to the morning star? Drake!—first upon the deep that rolls to Trafalgar!

And Spain knows well that flag of fiery fame. Spain knows who leads those files across the sea; Implacable, invincible, his name El Draque, creeps hissing through her ranks to lee; But now she holds the rolling heavens in fee. His ships are few. They surge across the foam, The hunt is up! But need the mountains flee Or fear the snarling wolf-pack? Let them come! They crouch, but dare not leap upon the flanks of Rome.

Nearer they come and nearer! Nay, preparc! Close your huge ranks that sweep from sky to sky! Madness itself would shrink: but Drake will dare Eternal hell! Let the great signal fly— Close up your ranks; El Draque comes down to die! El Draque is brave! The vast sea-cities loom Thro' heaven: Spain spares one smile of chivalry, One wintry smile across her cannons' gloom As that frail fleet full-sail comes rushing tow'rds its doom.

Suddenly, as the wild change of a dream, Even as the Spaniards watched those lean sharp prows Lean straight at their huge hulks, watched well content, Knowing their foes, once grappled, must be doomed: Even as they caught the rush and hiss of foam Across that narrow, dwindling gleam of sea. And heard, abruptly close, the sharp commands And steady British answers, caught one glimpse Of bare-armed seamen waiting by their guns. The vision changed! The ships of England swerved Swiftly—a volley of flame and thunder swept Blinding the buffeted air, a volley of iron From four sheer broadsides, crashing thro' a hulk Of Spain. She reeled, blind in the fiery surge And fury of that assault. So swift it seemed That as she heeled to leeward, ere her guns Trained on the foe once more, the sulphurous cloud That wrapped the sea, once, twice, and thrice again Split with red thunder-claps that rent and raked Her huge beams through and through. Ay, as she heeled To leeward still, her own grim cannon belched Their lava skyward, wounding the void air, And, as by miracle, the ships of Drake Were gone. Along the Spanish rear they swept From North to South, raking them as they went At close range, hardly a pistol-shot away, With volley on volley. Never Spain had seen Seamen or marksmen like to these who sailed Two knots against her one. They came and went. Suddenly neared or sheered away at will As if by magic, pouring flame and iron In four full broadsides thro' some Spanish hulk Ere one of hers burst blindly at the sky. Southward, along the Spanish rear they swept. Then swung about, and volleying sheets of flame, Iron, and death, along the same fierce road Littered with spars, reeking with sulphurous fumes. Returned, triumphantly rushing, all their sails Alow, aloft, full-bellied with the wind.

Then, then, from sky to sky, one mighty surge
Of baleful pride, huge wrath, stormy disdain,
With shuddering clouds and towers of sail would urge
Onward the heaving citadels of Spain,
Which dragged earth's thunders o'er the groaning main,
And held the panoplies of faith in fee,
Beating against the wind, struggling in vain
To close with that swift ocean-cavalry:
Spain had all earth in charge! Had England, then, the sea?

Spain had the mountains—mountains flow like clouds.

Spain had great kingdoms—kingdoms melt away!
Yet, in that crescent, army on army crowds,
How shall she fear what seas or winds can say?—
The seas that leap and shine round earth's decay,
The winds that mount and sing while empires fall,
And mountains pass like waves in the wind's way,
And dying gods thro' shuddering twilights call.
Had England, then, the sea that sweeps o'er one and all?

Her mighty prows round to the wild sea-wind:
The deep like one black maelstrom round her swirls
While great Recaldé follows hard behind:
Reeling, like Titans, thunder-blasted, blind,
They strive to cross the ships of England—yea,
Challenge them to the grapple, and only find
Red broadsides bursting o'er the bursting spray,
And England surging still along her windward way!

See, in gigantic wrath the Rata hurls

To windward still Revenge and Raleigh flash
And thunder, and the sea flames red between:
In vain against the wind the galleons crash
And plunge and pour blind volleys thro' the screen
Of rolling sulphurous clouds at dimly seen
Topsails that, to and fro, like sea-birds fly!
Ever to leeward the great hulks careen;
Their thousand cannon can but wound the sky,
While England's little Rainbow foams and flashes by.

Suddenly the flag-ship of Recaldé, stung To fury it seemed, heeled like an avalanche To leeward, then reeled out beyond the rest Against the wind, alone, daring the foe To grapple her. At once the little Revenge With Drake's flag flying flashed at her throat. And hardly a cable's-length away out-belched Broadside on broadside, under those great cannon. Crashing through five-foot beams, four shots to one, While Howard and the rest swept to and fro Keeping at deadly bay the rolling hulks That looming like Leviathans now plunged Desperately against the freshening wind To rescue the great flag-ship where she lay Alone, amid the cannonades of Drake. Alone, like a volcanic island lashed With crimson hurricanes, dinning the winds With isolated thunders, flaking the skies With wrathful lava, while great spars and blocks Leapt through the cloudy glare and fell, far off, Like small black stones into the hissing sea.

Oquendo saw her peril far away!

His rushing prow thro' heaven begins to loom,
Oquendo, first in all that proud array,
Hath heart the pride of Spain to reassume:
He comes; the rolling seas are dusked with gloom
Of his great sails! Now round him once again,
Thrust out your oars, ye mighty hulks of doom;
Forward, with hiss of whip and clank of chain!
Let twice ten hundred slaves bring on the wrath of Spain!

Sidonia comes! Toledo comes!—huge ranks
That rally against the storm from sky to sky,
As down the dark blood-rusted chain-locked planks
Of labouring galleys the dark slave-guards ply
Their knotted scourges, and the red flakes fly
From bare scarred backs that quiver and heave once more,
And slaves that heed not if they live or die
Pull with numb arms at many a red-stained oar,
Nor know the sea's dull crash from cannon's growing roar.

Bring on the wrath! From heaven to rushing heaven
The white foam sweeps around their fierce array;
In vain before their shattering crimson levin
The ships of England flash and dart away:
Not England's heart can hold that host at bay!
See, a swift signal shoots along her line,
Her ships are scattered, they fly, they fly like spray
Driven against the wind by wrath divine,
While, round Recaldé now, Sidonia's cannon shine.

The wild sea-winds with golden trumpets blaze!
One wave will wash away the crimson stain
That blots Recaldé's decks. Her first amaze
Is over: down the Channel once again
Turns the triumphant pageantry of Spain
In battle-order, now. Behind her, far,
While the broad sun sinks to the Western main,
Glitter the little ships of England's war,
And over them in heaven glides out the first white star.

The sun goes down: the heart of Spain is proud:

Her censers fume, her golden trumpets blow!
Into the darkening East with cloud on cloud
Of broad-flung sail her huge sea-castles go:
Rich under blazoned poops like rose-flushed snow
Tosses the foam. Far off the sunset gleams:
Her banners like a thousand sunsets glow,
As down the darkening East the pageant streams,
Full-fraught with doom for England, rigged with princely
dreams.

Nay, "rigged with curses dark," as o'er the waves Drake watched them slowly sweeping into the gloom That thickened down the Channel, watched them go In ranks compact, roundels impregnable, With Biscay's bristling broad-beamed squadron drawn Behind for rear-guard. As the sun went down Drake flew the council-flag. Across the sea That gleamed still like a myriad-petalled rose Up to the little Revenge the pinnaces foamed.

There, on Drake's powder-grimed escutcheoned poop They gathered, Admirals and great flag-captains, Hawkins, Frobisher, shining names and famous, And some content to serve and follow and fight Where duty called unknown, but heroes all. High on the poop they clustered, gazing East With faces dark as iron against the flame Of sunset, eagle-faces, iron lips, And leen eyes fiercely flashing as they turned Like sword-flames now, or dark and deep as night Watching the vast Armada slowly mix Its broad-flung sails with twilight where it dragged Thro' thickening heavens its curdled storms of clouds Down the wide darkening Channel.

"My Lord Howard," Said Drake, "it seems we have but scarred the skins Of those huge hulks: the hour grows late for England. "Twere well to handle them again at once." A growl Of fierce approval answered; but Lord Howard Cried out, "Attack we cannot, save at risk Of our whole fleet. It is not death I fear, But England's peril. We have fought all day, Accomplished nothing. Half our powder is spent! I think it best to hang upon their flanks Till we be reinforced."

"My lord," said Drake, "Had we that week to spare for which I prayed, And were we handling them in Spanish seas. We might delay. There is no choosing now. Yon hulks of doom are steadfastly resolved On one tremendous path and solid end-To join their powers with Parma's thirty thousand (Not heeding our light horsemen of the sea). Then in one earthquake of o'erwhelming arms Roll Europe ver England. They've not grasped The first poor thought which now and evermore Must be the sceptre of Britain, the steel trident Of ocean-sovereignty. That mighty fleet Invincible, impregnable, omnipotent, Must here and now be shattered, never be joined With Parma, never abase the wind-swept sea.

With oaken roads for thundering legions To trample in the splendour of the sun From Europe to our island.

As for food, In vonder enemy's fleet there is food enough To feed a nation; ay, and powder enough To split an empire. I will answer for it Ye shall not lack of either, nor for shot, Not though ye pluck them out of your own beams To feed your hungry cannon. Cast your bread Upon the waters. Think not of the Queen! She will not send it! For she hath not known (How could she know?) this wide new realm of hers, When we ourselves—her seamen—scarce have learnt What means this kingdom of the ocean-sea To England and her throne—food, life-blood, life! She could not understand who, when our ships Put out from Plymouth, hardly gave them store Of powder and shot to last three fighting days, Or rations even for those. Blame not the Queen, Who hath striven for England as no king hath fought Since England was a nation. Bear with me, For I must pour my heart before you now This one last time. You fishing-boats have brought Tidings how on this very day she rode Before her mustered pikes at Tilbury. Methinks I see her riding down their lines High on her milk-white Barbary charger, hear Her voice—'My people, though my flesh be woman, My heart is of your kingly lion's breed: I come myself to lead you!' I see the sun Shining upon her armour, hear the voice Of all her armies roaring like one sea-God save Elizabeth, our English Queen! 'God save her,' I say, too; but still she dreams, As all too many of us-bear with me!-dream, Of Crécy, when our England's war was thus; When we, too, hurled our hosts across the deep As now Spain dreams to hurl them on our isle. But now our war is otherwise. We claim The sea's command, and Spain shall never land

One swordsman on our island. Blame her not. But look not to the Queen. The people fight This war of ours, not princes. In this hour God maketh us a people. We have seen Victories, never victory like to this, When in our England's darkest hour of need Her seamen, without wage, powder, or food, Are yet on fire to fight for her. Your ships Tossing in the great sunset of an Empire, Dawn of a sovereign people, are all manned By heroes, raggèd, hungry, who will die Like flies ere long, because they have no food But turns to fever-breeding carrion Not fit for dogs. They are half-naked, hopeless Living, of any reward; and if they die They die a dog's death. We shall reap the fame While they-great God! and all this cannot quench The glory in their eyes. They will be served Six at the mess of four, eking it out With what their own rude nets may catch by night, Silvering the guns and naked arms that haul Under the stars with silver past all price, While some small ship-boy in the black crow's nest Watches across the waters for the foe. My lord, it is a terrible thing for Spain When poor men thus go out against her princes; For so God whispers 'Victory' in our ears, I cannot dare to doubt it."

Once again
A growl of fierce approval answered him,
And Hawkins cried—"I stand by Francis Drake";
But Howard, clinging to his old-world order,
Yet with such manly strength as dared to rank
Drake's wisdom of the sea above his own,
Sturdily shook his head. "I dare not risk
A close attack. Once grappled we are doomed.
We'll follow on their trail no less, with Drake
Leading. Our oriflamme to-night shall be
His cresset and stern-lanthorn. Where that shines
We follow."

Drake, still thinking in his heart,—
"And if Spain be not shattered here and now
We are doomed no less," must even rest content
With that good vantage.

As the sunset died Over the darkling emerald seas that swelled Before the freshening wind, the pinnaces dashed To their own ships: and into the mind of Drake There stole a plot that twitched his lips to a smile. High on the heaving purple of the poop Under the glimmer of firm and full-blown sails He stood, an iron statue, glancing back Anon at his stern-cresset's crimson flare, The star of all the shadowy ships that plunged Like ghosts amid the grey stream of his wake. And all around him heard the low keen song Of hidden ropes above the wail and creak Of blocks and long low swish of cloven feam, A keen rope-music in the formless night, A harmony, a strong intent good sound, Well-strung and taut, singing the will of man. "Your oriflamme," he muttered,—"so you travail With sea-speech in the tongue of old Poictiers— Shall be my own stern-lanthorn. Watch it well. My good Lord Howard."

Over the surging seas The little Revenge went swooping on the trail, Leading the ships of England. One by one Out of the gloom before them slowly crept. Sinister gleam by gleam, like blood-red stars, The rearmost lanthorns of the Spanish Fleet, A shaggy purple sky of secret storm Heaving from north to south upon the black Breast of the waters. Once again with lips Twitched to a smile, Drake suddenly bade them crowd All sail upon the little Revenge. She leapt Forward. Smiling he watched the widening gap Between the ships that followed and her light. Then as to those behind, its flicker must seem Wellnigh confused with those of Spain, he cried, "Now, master bo'sun, quench their oriflamine,

Dip their damned cresset in the good black Sea! The rearmost light of Spain shall lead them now, A little closer, if they think it ours. Pray God, they come to blows!"

Even as he spake His cresset-flare went out in the thick night: A fluttering as of blind bewildered moths A moment seized upon the shadowy ships Behind him, then with crowded sail they steered Straight for the rearmost cresset-flare of Spain.

BOOK XII

Meanwhile, as in the gloom he slipped aside Along the Spanish ranks, waiting the crash Of battle, suddenly Drake became aware Of strange sails bearing up into the wind Around his right, and thought, "the Armada strives To weather us in the dark." Down went his helm. And all alone the little Revenge gave chase, Till as the moon crept slowly forth, she stood Beside the ghostly ships, only to see Bewildered Flemish merchantmen, amazed With fears of Armageddon—such vast shrouds Had lately passed them on the rolling seas. Down went his helm again, with one grim curse Upon the chance that led him thus astray: And down the wind the little Revenge once more Swept on the trail. Fainter and fainter now Glared the red beacons on the British coasts, And the wind slackened and the glimmering East Greved and reddened, vet Drake had not regained Sight of the ships. When the full glory of dawn Dazzled the sea, he found himself alone, With one huge galleon helplessly drifting A cable's-length away. Around her prow, Nuestra Señora del Rosario. Richly emblazoned, gold on red, proclaimed The flagship of great Valdes, of the fleet Of Andalusia, captain-general. She.

Last night, in dark collision with the hulks Of Spain, had lost her foremast. Through the night Her guns, long rank on deadly rank, had kept All enemies at bay. Drake summoned her Instantly to surrender. She returned A scornful answer from the glittering poop Where two-score officers crowned the golden sea And stained the dawn with blots of richer colour Loftily clustered in the glowing sky, Doubleted with cramoisy velvet, wreathed With golden chains, blazing with jewelled swords And crusted poignards. "What proud haste was this?" They asked, glancing at their huge tiers of cannon And crowded decks of swarthy soldiery; "What madman in you cockle-shell defied Spain?"

"Tell them it is El Draque," he said, "who lacks
The time to parley; therefore it will be well
They strike at once, for I am in great haste."
There, at the sound of that renowned name,
Without a word down came their blazoned flag.
Like a great fragment of the dawn it lay
Crumpled upon their decks. . . .

Into the soft bloom and Italian blue Of sparkling, ever-beautiful Torbay, Belted as with warm Mediterranean crags, The little Revenge foamed with her mighty prize, A prize indeed-not for the casks of gold Drake split in the rich sunlight and poured out Like dross amongst his men, but in her hold Lay many tops of powder, worth their weight In rubies now to Britain. Into the hands Of swarthy Brixham fishermen he gave Prisoners and prize, then-loaded stem to stern With powder and shot—their swiftest trawlers flew Like falcons following a thunder-cloud Behind him, as with crowded sail he rushed On England's trail once more. Like a caged lion Drake paced his deck, praying he yet might reach The fight in time; and ever the warm light wind

Slackened. Not till the sun was half-way fallen Once more crept out in front those dusky thrones Of thunder, heaving on the smooth bright sea From North to South with Howard's clustered fleet Like tiny clouds, becalmed, not half a mile Behind the Spaniards. For the breeze had failed Their blind midnight pursuit: and now attack Seemed hopeless. Even as Drake drew nigh, the last Breath of the wind sank. One more day had flown. Nought was accomplished; and the Armada lay Some leagues of golden sea-way nearer now To its great goal. The sun went down: the moon Rose glittering. Hardly a cannon-shot apart The two fleets lav becalmed upon the silver Swell of the smooth night-tide. The hour had come For Spain to strike. The ships of England drifted Helplessly, at the mercy of those great hulks Oared by their thousand slaves.

Onward they came,

Swinging suddenly in tremendous gloom Over the silver seas. But even as Drake, With eves on fire at last for his last fight, Measured the distance ere he gave the word To greet it with his cannon, suddenly The shining face of the deep began to shiver With dusky patches: the doomed English sails Quivered and, filling smart from the North-east, The little Revenge rushed down their broken line Signalling them to follow, and ere they knew What miracle had saved them, they all sprang Their luff and ran large out to sea. For now The Armada lay to windward, and to fight Meant to be grappled and overwhelmed; but dark Within the mind of Drake, a fiercer plan Already had shaped itself.

"They fly! They fly!"
Rending the heavens from twice ten thousand throats
A mighty shout rose from the Spanish Fleet.
Over the moonlit waves their galleons came
Towering, crowding, plunging down the wind
In full chase, while the tempter, Drake, laughed low

To watch their solid battle-order break And straggle. When once more the golden dawn Dazzled the deep, the labouring galleons lay Scattered by their unequal speed. The wind Veered as the sun rose. Once again the ships Of England lay to windward. Down swooped Drake Where like a mountain the San Marcos heaved Her giant flanks alone, having out-sailed Her huge companions. Then the sea-winds blazed With broadsides. Two long hours the sea flamed red All round her. One by one the Titan ships Came surging to her rescue, and met the buffet Of battle-thunders, belching iron and flame; Nor could they pluck her forth from that red chaos Till great Oquendo hurled his mighty prows Crashing athwart those thunders, and once more Gathered into unshakeable battle-order The whole Armada raked the reeking seas. Then up the wind the ships of England sheered Once more, and one more day drew to its close, With little accomplished, half their powder spent, And all the Armada moving as of old, From sky to sky one heaven-wide zone of storm, (Though some three galleons out of all their host Laboured woundily) down the darkening Channel. And all night long on England's guardian heights The beacons reddened, and all the next long day The impregnable Armada never swerved From its tremendous path. In vain did Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins, Howard, greatest names In all our great sea-history, hover and dart Like falcons round the mountainous array. Till now, as night fell and they lay abreast Of the Isle of Wight, once more the council flag Flew from the little Revenge. With iron face Thrust close to Howard's, and outstretched iron arm, Under the stars Drake pointed down the coast Where the red beacons flared. "The shoals," he hissed. "The shoals from Owers to Spithead and the net Of channels yonder in Portsmouth Roads. At dawn They'll lie to leeward of the Invincible Fleet!"

Swiftly, in mighty sweeping lines Drake set Before the council his fierce battle-plan To drive the Armada down upon the banks And utterly shatter it—stroke by well-schemed stroke As he unfolded there his vital plot And touched their dead cold warfare into life Where plan before was none, he seemed to tower Above them, clad with the deep night of stars; And those that late would rival knew him now, In all his great simplicity, their king, One of the gods of battle, England's Drake, A soul that summoned Cæsar from his grave, And swept with Alexander o'er the deep.

So when the dawn thro' rolling wreaths of cloud Struggled, and all the waves were molten gold, The heart of Spain exulted, for she saw The little fleet of England cloven in twain As if by some strange discord. A light breeze Blew from the ripening East; and, up against it, Urged by the very madness of defeat, Or so it seemed, one half the British fleet Drew nigh, towed by their boats, to challenge the vast Tempest-winged heaving citadels of Spain. At last to the murderous grapple; while far away Their other half, led by the flag of Drake, Stood out to sea, as if to escape the doom Of that sheer madness, for the light wind now Could lend them no such wings to hover and swoop As heretofore. Nearer the mad ships came Towed by their boats, till now upon their right To windward loomed the Fleet Invincible With all its thunder-clouds, and on their left To leeward, gleamed the perilous white shoals With their long level lightnings under the cliffs Of England, from the green glad garden of Wight To the Owers and Selsea Bill. Right on they came, And suddenly the wrench of thundering cannon Shook the vast hulks that towered above them. Flamed the blue sea between. Thunder to thunder Answered, and still the ships of Drake sped out

To the open sea. Sidonia saw them go. Furrowing the deep that like a pale-blue shield Lay diamond-dazzled now in the full light. Rich was the omen of that day for Spain, The feast-day of Sidonia's patron-saint! And the priests chanted and the trumpets blew Triumphantly! A universal shout Went skyward from the locust-swarming decks, A shout that rent the golden morning clouds From heaven to menacing heaven, as eastle to castle Flew the great battle-signal, and like one range Of moving mountains, those almighty ranks Swept down upon the small forsaken ships! The lion's brood was in the imperial nets Of Spain at last. Onward the mountains came With all their golden clouds of sail and flags Like streaming cataracts; all their glorious chasms And glittering steeps, echoing, re-echoing, Calling, answering, as with the herald winds That blow the golden trumpets of the morning From Skiddaw to Helvellyn. In the midst The great San Martin surged with heaven-wide press Of proudly billowing sail; and yet once more Slowly, solemnly, like another dawn Up to her mast-head soared in thunderous gold The sacred standard of their last crusade: While round a hundred prows that heaved thro' heaven Like granite cliffs, their black wet shining flanks, And swept like moving promontories, rolled The splendid long-drawn thunders of the foam, And flashed the untamed white lightnings of the sea Back to a morn unhalyarded of man, Back to the unleashed sun and blazoned clouds And azure sky—the unfettered flag of God.

Like one huge moving coast-line on they came
Crashing, and closed the ships of England round
With one fierce crescent of thunder and sweeping flame,
One crimson seythe of Death, whose long sweep drowned
The eternal ocean with its mighty sound,

From heaven to heaven, one roar, one glitter of doom.
While out to the sea-line's blue remotest bound
The ships of Drake still fled, and the red fume
Of battle thickened and shrouded shoal and sea with gloom.

The distant sea, the close white menacing shoals
Are shrouded! And the lion's brood fight on!
And now death's very midnight round them rolls;
Rent is the flag that late so proudly shone!
The red decks reel and their last hope seems gone!
Round them they still keep clear one ring of sea:
It narrows; but the lion's brood fight on,
Ungrappled still, still fearless and still free,
While the white menacing shoals creep slowly out to lee.

Now through the red rents of each fire-cleft cloud,
High o'er the British blood-greased decks flash out
Thousands of swarthy faces, crowd on crowd
Surging, with one tremendous hurricane shout
On, to the grapple! and still the grim redoubt
Of the oaken bulwarks rolls them back again,
As buffeted waves that shatter in the furious bout
When cannonading cliffs meet the full main
And hurl it back in smoke—so Britain hurls back Spain;

Hurls her back, only to see her return,
Darkening the heavens with billow on billow of sail:
Round that huge storm the waves like lava burn,
The daylight withers, and the sea-winds fail!
Seamen of England, what shall now avail
Your naked arms? Before those blasts of doom
The sun is quenched, the very sea-waves quail:
High overhead their triumphing thousands loom,
When hark! what low deep guns to windward suddenly boom?

What low deep strange new thunders far away Respond to the triumphant shout of Spain? Is it the wind that shakes their giant array? Is it the deep wrath of the rising main? Is it—El Draque? El Draque! Ay, shout again, His thunders burst upon your windward flanks;

The shoals creep out to leeward! Is it plain
At last, what earthquake heaves your herded ranks
Huddled in huge dismay tow'rds those white foam-swept
banks?

Plain, it was plain at last, what cunning lured, What courage held them over the jaws o' the pit, Till Drake could hurl them down. The little ships Of Howard and Frobisher, towed by their boats, Slipped away in the smoke, while out at sea Drake, with a gale of wind behind him, crashed Volley on volley into the helpless rear Of Spain and drove it down, huddling the whole Invincible Fleet together upon the verge Of doom. One awful surge of stormy wrath Heaved thro' the struggling citadels of Spain. From East to West their desperate signal flew, And like a drove of bullocks, with the foam Flecking their giant sides, they staggered and swerved, Careening tow'rds the shallows as they turned, Then in one wild stampede of sheer dismay Rushed, tacking seaward, while the grey sea-plain Smoked round them, and the cannonades of Drake Raked their wild flight; and the crusading flag, Tangled in one black maze of crashing spars, Whirled downward like the pride of Lucifer From heaven to hell.

Out tow'rds the coasts of France
They plunged, narrowly weathering the Ower banks;
Then, once again, they formed in ranks compact,
Roundels impregnable, wrathfully bent at last
Never to swerve again from their huge path
And solid end—to join with Parma's host,
And hurl the whole of Europe on our isle.
Another day was gone, much powder spent;
And, while Lord Howard exulted and conferred
Knighthoods on his brave seamen, Drake alone
Knew that his mighty plan, in spite of all,
Had failed, knew that wellnigh his last great chance
Was lost of wrecking the Spaniards ere they joined
Parma. The night went by, and the next day,

With scarce a visible scar the Invincible Fleet Drew onwards tow'rds its goal, unshakeable now In that grim battle-order. Beacons flared Along the British coast, and pikes flashed out All night, and a strange dread began to grip The heart of England, as it seemed the might Of seamen most renowned in all the world Checked not that huge advance. Yet at the heart Of Spain no less there clung a vampire fear And strange foreboding, as the next day passed Quietly, and behind her all day long The shadowy ships of Drake stood on her trail Quietly, patiently, as death or doom, Unswerving and implacable.

While the sun

Sank thro' long crimson fringes on that eve,
The fleets were passing Calais and the wind
Blew fair behind them. A strange impulse seized
Spain to shake off those bloodhounds from her trail,
And suddenly the whole Invincible Fleet
Anchored, in hope the following wind would bear
The ships of England past and carry them down
To leeward. But their grim insistent watch
Was ready; and though their van had wellnigh crashed
Into the rear of Spain, in the golden dusk,
They, too, a cannon-shot away, at once
Anchored, to windward still.

Quietly heaved
The golden sea in that tremendous hour
Fraught with the fate of Europe and mankind,
As yet once more the flag of council flew,
And Hawkins, Howard, Frobisher, and Drake
Gathered together upon the little Revenge,
While like a triumphing fire the news was borne
To Spain, already, that the Invincible Fleet
Had reached its end, ay, and "that great black dog
Sir Francis Drake" was writhing now in chains
Beneath the torturer's hands.

High on his poop He stood, a granite rock, above the throng Of captains, there amid the breaking waves Of clashing thought and swift opinion, Silent, gazing where now the cool fresh wind Blew steadily up the terrible North Sea Which rolled under the clouds into a gloom Unfathomable. Once only his lips moved Half-consciously, breathing those mighty words, The clouds His chariot! Then, suddenly, he turned And looked upon the little flock of ships That followed on the fleet of England, sloops Helpless in fight. These, manned by the brave zeal Of many a noble house, from hour to hour Had plunged out from the coast to join his flag. "Better if they had brought us powder and food Than sought to join us thus," he had growled; but now "Lord God," he cried aloud, "they'll light our road To victory yet!" And in great sweeping strokes Once more he drew his mighty battle-plan Before the captains. In the thickening gloom They stared at his grim face as at a man Risen from hell, with all the powers of hell At his command, a face tempered like steel In the everlasting furnaces, a rock Of adamant, while with a voice that blent With the ebb and flow of the everlasting sea He spake, and at the low deep menacing words Monotonous with the unconquerable Passion and level strength of his great soul They shuddered; for the man seemed more than man, And from his iron lips resounded doom As from the lips of cannon, doom to Spain, Inevitable, unconquerable doom.

And through that mighty host of Spain there crept
Cold winds of fear, as to the darkening sky
Once more from lips of kneeling thousands swept
The vespers of an Empire—one vast cry,
Salve Regina! God, what wild reply
Hissed from the clouds in that dark hour of dreams?
Ave Maria, those about to die
Salute thee! See, what ghostly pageant streams
Above them? What thin hands point down like pale moenbeams?

Thick as the ghosts that Dante saw in hell Whirled on the blast thro' boundless leagues of pain, Thick, thick as wind-blown leaves innumerable, In the Inquisition's vellow robes her slain And tortured thousands, dense as the red rain That wellnigh quenched her fires, went hissing by With twisted shapes, raw from the racks of Spain. SALVE REGINA!—rushing thro' the sky, And pale hands pointing down and lips that mocked her cry.

Ten thousand times ten thousand!—what are these That are arrayed in vellow robes and sweep Between your prayers and God like phantom seas Prophesying over your masts? Could Rome not keep The keys? Who loosed these dead to break your sleep? SALVE REGINA, cry, yea, cry aloud, AVE MARIA! Ye have sown: shall ve not reap? SALVE REGINA! Christ, what fiery cloud Suddenly rolls to windward, high o'er mast and shroud?

Are hell-gates burst at last? For the black deep To windward burns with streaming crimson fires! Over the wild strange waves, they shudder and creep Nearer—strange smoke-wreathed masts and spars, red spires And blazing hulks, vast roaring blood-red pyres, Fierce as the flames ve fed with flesh of men Amid the imperial pomp and chanting choirs

Of Alva-from El Draque's red hand again

Sweep the wild fire-ships down upon the Fleet of Spain.

Onward before the freshening wind they come Full fraught with all the terrors, all the bale That flamed so long for the delight of Rome. The shricking fires that struck the sunlight pale. The avenging fires at last! Now what avail Your thousand ranks of cannon? Swift, cut free, Cut your scorched cables! Cry, reel backward, quail, Crash your huge huddled ranks together, flee! Behind you roars the fire, before—the dark North Sea!

Dawn, everlasting and omnipotent Dawn rolled in crimson o'er the spar-strewn waves, As the last trumpet shall in thunder roll O'er heaven and earth and ocean. Far away, The ships of Spain, great ragged piles of gloom And shaggy splendour, leaning to the North Like sun-shot clouds confused, or rent apart In scattered squadrons, furiously plunged, Burying their mighty prows i' the broad grey rush Of smoking billowy hills, or heaving high Their giant bowsprits to the wandering heavens, Labouring in vain to return, struggling to lock Their far-flung ranks anew, but drifting still To leeward, driven by the ever-increasing storm Straight for the dark North Sea. Hard by there lurched One gorgeous galleon on the ravening shoals, Feeding the white maw of the famished waves With gold and purple webs from kingly looms And spilth of world-wide empires. Howard, still Planning to pluck the Armada plume by plume. Swooped down upon that prev and swiftly engaged Her desperate guns; while Drake, our ocean-king, Knowing the full worth of that doom-fraught hour, Glanced neither to the left nor right, but stood High on his poop, with calm implacable face Gazing as into eternity, and steered The crowded glory of his dawn-flushed sails In superb onset, straight for the great fleet Invincible; and after him the main Of England's fleet, knowing its captain now. Followed, and with them rushed-from sky to sky One glittering charge of wrath—the storm's white waves, The twenty thousand foaming chariots Of God.

None but the everlasting voice
Of him who fought at Salamis might sing
The fight of that dread Sabbath. Not mankind
Waged it alone. War raged in heaven that day,
Where Michael and his angels drave once more
The hosts of darkness ruining down the abyss

Of chaos. Light against darkness, Liberty Against all dark old despotism, unsheathed The sword in that great hour. Behind the strife Of men embattled deeps beyond all thought Moved in their awful panoply, as move Silent, invisible, swift, under the clash Of waves and flash of foam, huge ocean-glooms And vast reserves of inappellable power. The bowsprits ranked on either fore-front seemed But spear-heads of those dread antagonists Invisible: the shuddering sails of Spain Dusk with the shadow of death, the sunward sails Of England full-fraught with the breath of God. Onward the ships of England and God's waves Triumphantly charged, glittering companions, And poured their thunders on the extreme right Of Spain, whose giant galleons as they lurched Heavily to the roughening sea and wind With all their grinding, wrenching cannon, worked On rolling platforms by the helpless hands Of twenty thousand soldiers, without skill In stormy seas, rent the indifferent sky Or tore the black troughs of the swirling deep In vain, while volley on volley of flame and iron Burst thro' their four-foot beams, fierce raking blasts From ships that came and went on wings of the wind All round their mangled bulk, scarce a pike's thrust Away, sweeping their decks from stem to stern (Between the rush and roar of the great green waves) With crimson death, rending their timbered towns And populous floating streets into wild squares Of slaughter and devastation; driving them down, Huddled on their own centre, cities of shame And havoc, in fiery forests of tangled wrath. With hurricanes of huge masts and swarming spars And multitudinous decks that heaved and sank Like earthquake-smitten palaces, when doom Comes, with one stride, across the pomp of kings. All round them shouted the everlasting sea, Burst in white thunders on the streaming poops

And blinded fifty thousand eyes with spray. Once, as a gorgeous galleon, drenched with blood Began to founder and settle, a British captain Called from his bulwarks, bidding her fierce crew Surrender and come aboard. Straight through the heart A hundred muskets answered that appeal. Sink or destroy! The deadly signal flew From mast to mast of England. Once, twice, thrice, A huge sea-castle heaved her haggled bulk Heavenward, and with a cry that rent the heavens From all her crowded deeks, and one deep roar As of a cloven world or the dark surge Of chaos vawning, sank: the swirling slopes Of the sweeping billowy hills for a moment swarmed With struggling insect-men, sprinkling the foam With tossing arms; then the indifferent sea Rolled its grey smoking waves across the place Where they had been. Here a great galleasse poured Red rivers through her scuppers and torn flanks, And there a galleon, wrapped in creeping fire. Suddenly like a vast volcano split Asunder, and o'er the vomiting sulphurous clouds And spouting spread of crimson, flying spars And heads torn from their trunks and scattered limbs Leapt, hideous gouts of death, against the glare. Hardly the thrust of a pike away, the ships Of England flashed and swerved, till in one mass Of thunder-blasted splendour and shuddering gloom Those gorgeous floating citadels huddled and shrank Their towers, and all the glory of dawn that rolled And burned along the tempest of their banners Withered, as on a murderer's face the light Withers before the accuser. All their proud Castles and towers and heaven-wide clouds of sail Shrank to a darkening horror, like the heart Of Evil, plucked from midnight's fiercest gloom, With all its curses quivering and alive: A horror of wild masts and tangled spars, Like some great kraken with a thousand arms Torn from the filthiest cavern of the deep.

Writhing, and spewing forth its venomous fumes On every side. Sink or destroy!-all day The deadly signal flew; and ever the sea Swelled higher, and the flashes of the foam Broadened and leapt and spread as a wild white fire That flourishes with the wind; and ever the storm Drave the grim battle onward to the wild Menace of the dark North Sea. At set of sun, Even as below the sea-line the broad disc Sank like a red-hot cannon-ball through scurf Of seething molten lead, the Santa Maria Uttering one cry that split the heart of heaven Went down with all hands, roaring into the dark. Hardly five rounds of shot were left to Drake! Gun after gun fell silent, as the night Deepened—"Yet we must follow them to the North," He cried, "or they'll return vet to shake hands With Parma! Come, we'll put a brag upon it, And hunt them onward as we lacked for nought!" So, when across the swinging smoking seas. Grey and splendid and terrible broke the day Once more, the flying Invincible fleet beheld Upon their weather-beam, and dogging them Like their own shadow, the dark ships of Drake, Unswerving and implacable. Ever the wind And sea increased; till now the heaving deep Swelled all around them into sulky hills And rolling mountains, whose majestic crests, Like wild white flames far blown and savagely flickering Swept thro' the clouds; and, on their vanishing slopes, Past the pursuing fleet began to swirl Scores of horses and mules, drowning or drowned, Cast overboard to lighten the wild flight Of Spain, and save her water-casks, a trail Telling of utmost fear. And ever the storm Roared louder across the leagues of rioting sea, Driving her onward like a mighty stag Chased by the wolves. Off the dark Firth of Forth At last, Drake signalled and lav head to wind. Watching. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand," He muttered, as, for a moment close at hand, Caught in some league-wide whirlpool of the sea, The mighty galleons crowded and towered and plunged Above him on the huge o'erhanging billows, As if to crash down on his decks; the next, A mile of ravening sea had swept between Each of those wind-whipt straws and they were gone, With all their tiny shrivelling scrolls of sail, Through roaring deserts of embattled death, Where like a hundred thousand chariots charged With lightnings and with thunders, the great deep Hurled them away to the North. From sky to sky One blanching bursting storm of infinite seas Followed them, broad white cataracts, hills that grasped With struggling Titan hands at reeling heavens, And roared their doom-fraught greetings from Cape Wrath Round to the Bloody Foreland.

There should the yeast
Of foam receive the purple of many kings,
And the grim gulfs devour the blood-bought gold
Of Aztecs and of Incas, and the reefs,
League after league, bristle with mangled spars,
And all along their coasts the murderous kerns
Of Catholic Ireland strip the gorgeous silks
And chains and jewel-enerusted crucifixes
From thousands dead, and slaughter thousands more
With gallow-glass axes as they blindly crept
Forth from the surf and jagged rocks to seek
Pity of their own creed.

To meet that doom
Drake watched their sails go shrivelling, till the last
Flicker of spars vanished as a skeleton leaf
Upon the blasts of winter, and there was nought
But one wide wilderness of splendour and gloom
Under the northern clouds.

"Not unto us,"
Cried Drake, "not unto us—but unto Him
Who made the sea, belongs our England now!
Pray God that heart and mind and soul we prove
Worthy among the nations of this hour

And this great victory, whose ocean fame Shall wash the world with thunder till that day When there is no more sea, and the strong cliffs Pass like a smoke, and the last peal of it Sounds thro' the trumpet."

So, with close-hauled sails. Over the rolling triumph of the deep,
Lifting their hearts to heaven, they turned back home.

CENTRAL CIRCULATION CHILDREN'S ROOM







